

SELECTED LARGER CHORAL WORKS  
OF F. MELIUS CHRISTIANSEN (1871-1955)

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Nicki Lynn Toliver

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

Major Department:  
Music

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# North Dakota State University

## Graduate School

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Title

SELECTED LARGER CHORAL WORKS OF F. MELIUS CHRISTIANSEN (1871-1955)

By

NICKI BAKKO TOLIVER

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## ABSTRACT

Toliver, Nicki Lynn, D.M.A., Department of Music, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, North Dakota State University, April 2011. Selected Larger Choral Works of F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955). Major Professor: Dr. Michael Weber.

F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955) composed four larger choral works between 1917 and 1925. The *Reformation Cantata*, composed in 1917, commemorates the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation and the merger of three church synods into the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. The cantata is scored for baritone, tenor, and soprano soli, chorus, and orchestra. Christiansen's oratorio, *The Prodigal Son*, was composed in 1918. The performing forces include SATB soli and SATB chorus with orchestra or keyboard accompaniment. In 1922, Christiansen composed a multi-movement *a cappella* work for the St. Olaf Choir entitled *Psalm 50*. The *Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata* was written in 1925 in commemoration of the Norwegian immigrants who sailed to America and established their homes. The cantata is scored for soprano and baritone soli, mixed chorus, and orchestra. A general analysis of these four larger choral works was performed.

This document, with structural analysis and historical background of selected works, is intended to provide conductors with insights into Christiansen's repertoire. The literature selected displays the composer's diversity of genres and compositional techniques. For each work, the document includes the identification of melodic and thematic material, musical examples, text sources, vocal ranges, and details regarding form, key structure, rhythm, dynamics, texture, timbre, harmony, expressive devices, and motivic development.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**To Michael Weber and Jo Ann Miller**

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**To René Clausen**

for his support and mentorship

**To my husband, Travis**

for his constant love and prayer

**To our parents**

Scott and Cindy Bakko  
Wayne and Tina Toliver

for their strength and encouragement

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The parameters of this study are limited by the inability to secure neither a full orchestral score nor instrumental parts for the selected larger choral works by F. Melius Christiansen. Therefore, conclusions within this document regarding instrumental participation may only be drawn from indications, as marked by the composer, in the keyboard reductions of the vocal scores published by Augsburg Publishing House. The following institutions and peoples were contacted for assistance in securing full orchestral scores. The search was unsuccessful as the location and existence of instrumental scores is unknown.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	viii
CHAPTER 1. A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY .....	1
A Norwegian Childhood.....	1
The American Dream.....	3
St. Olaf College.....	7
Influence and Legacy.....	13
CHAPTER 2. THE ORATORIO.....	16
The Prodigal Son.....	16
CHAPTER 3. THE CANTATAS .....	45
Reformation Cantata .....	45
Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata .....	62
CHAPTER 4. AN UNACCOMPANIED MULTI-MOVEMENT WORK.....	78
Psalm 50.....	78
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION .....	91
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	96

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Individual movements as labeled by the composer, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> . ....	17
2. Rondo form, Mvt. 15, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> . ....	35
3. Scriptural sources by movement, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> .....	41
4. Vocal ranges, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> . ....	42
5. Individual movements as labeled by the composer, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> . ....	47
6. Vocal ranges, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> .....	61
7. Individual movements as labeled by the composer, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> .....	64
8. Vocal ranges, <i>Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata</i> . ....	77
9. Vocal ranges, <i>Psalm 50</i> .....	89

## LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

<u>Example</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 1 (Overture), primary melodic theme (mm. 1-8).....	18
2. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 1 (Overture), melodic material (mm. 19-30). ....	18
3. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 1 (Overture), counter-theme (mm. 63-66). ....	19
4. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 1 (Overture), three-note motive (mm. 95-96). ....	19
5. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 1 (Overture), fugal subject and answer (mm. 108-111). ....	20
6. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 2, introduction (mm. 1-4).....	21
7. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 2, chorus (mm. 1-3). ....	22
8. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 6, first melodic idea (m. 1).....	26
9. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 6, second melodic idea (m. 10).....	27
10. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 7, melodic theme (m. 1).....	28
11. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 7 (mm. 16-22). ....	28
12. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 8, lyric melody (mm. 1-12).....	29
13. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , comparison of melodic material from Mvt. 5 (mm. 14-15) and Mvt. 12 (mm. 1-2). ....	33
14. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 13, voice pairing in imitation (mm. 6-8).....	34
15. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 15, <i>a cappella</i> texture (mm. 102-119). ....	36
16. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 15, text painting (mm. 64-66). ....	37



## LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES (Continued)

<u>Example</u>	<u>Page</u>
17. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 16, mature fugal writing style (mm. 6-16).....	38
18. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>The Prodigal Son</i> , Mvt. 16, plagal cadence (mm. 95-100). ....	39
19. Martin Luther, <i>Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott</i> , chorale tune, original metrical version.....	45
20. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 1 (Overture), primary motive (mm. 1-4). ....	48
21. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 1 (Overture), fugal subject and answer (mm. 18-21).....	48
22. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 1 (Overture), second theme (mm. 66-81).....	49
23a. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 2 (mm. 1-6).....	50
23b. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 2 (mm. 7-10). ....	51
24. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 3, second theme from Mvt. 1 (Overture), (mm. 11-15).....	52
25. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 3, closing motive (m. 28). ...	53
26. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 4, melodic theme (mm. 1-2). ....	54
27. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 5, text painting (mm. 54-57). ....	55
28. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 6, recurring melodic motif (mm. 1-2).....	56
29. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 7, first theme and recitative (mm. 1-2 and 15-17). ....	57
30. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , Mvt. 7, second theme (mm. 63-64). ....	57

## LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES (Continued)

<u>Example</u>	<u>Page</u>
31. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Reformation Cantata</i> , comparison of melodic material in Mvt. 7 (mm. 81-84) and Mvt. 10 (mm. 7-10).....	60
32. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> , Mvt. 1, first theme (mm. 1-8).....	65
33. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> , Mvt. 1, second theme (mm. 21-24). ....	65
34. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> , Mvt. 1, Norwegian National Anthem with Rothnem's English text (mm. 53-72).....	66
35. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> , Mvt. 2, first theme (mm. 5-12).....	67
36. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> , Mvt. 5, continuity motif (m. 1). ....	70
37. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> , Mvt. 6, first theme (mm. 3-5).....	71
38. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> , Mvt. 6, second theme (mm. 11-14). ....	71
39. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Centennial Cantata</i> , Mvt. 6, baritone (mm. 79-81).....	73
40. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 1, first melodic idea (mm. 1-6). ....	79
41. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 1, second melodic idea (mm. 7-10).....	80
42. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 1, third melodic idea (mm. 28-31). ....	80
43. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 1, comparison of measures 4-6 and measures 51-52. ....	81
44. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 1 (mm. 75-77). ....	83
45. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 2, primary melodic material (mm. 12-19). ....	84
46. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 2, secondary melodic material (mm. 21-22). ....	85
47. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 3, fugal subject (mm. 1-6).....	86
48. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 3, countersubject (mm. 6-8). ....	87

## LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES (Continued)

<u>Example</u>	<u>Page</u>
49. F. Melius Christiansen, <i>Psalm 50</i> , Mvt. 3, fugal subject in inversion (mm. 54-56). .....	88

## CHAPTER 1. A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY

### *A Norwegian Childhood*

Fredrik Melius Christiansen was born on April 1, 1871, in the small settlement of Berger, near Eidsvold, Norway. Christiansen grew up in an actively musical home. Anders, his father, led the local factory band and was a skillful cornetist, trombonist, and bass viol player.<sup>1</sup> The matriarch, Oleana, had a naturally beautiful voice and nurtured the family's musical interests.

With a house full of amateur musicians, including eldest son Karl, F. Melius, and younger brother Kristian, the music education of the children was an early concern. At the age of three, F. Melius was given a small, three-key clarinet and his musical training began with instruction from his uncle Fredrik. While visiting Oleana's family farm, F. Melius' grandfather would play his violin, let F. Melius hold it, and show him how to draw the bow across the strings. The talented six-year-old was allowed to play the clarinet in his father's factory band and proudly marched in the *Syttende Mai* (Norwegian Constitution Day) parade of 1877.<sup>2</sup>

Anders Christiansen moved his young family three times before settling in Larvik in 1879. This new location provided the enhanced musical opportunities of the big city: choirs, orchestras, bands, and applied lessons. F. Melius soon began studying violin with a Professor Olsen<sup>3</sup> as well as piano and organ with Oscar Hansen. Lessons with the professor

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph M. Shaw, *The St. Olaf Choir: A Narrative* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1997), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Leola Nelson Bergmann, *Music Master of the Middle West: The Story of F. Melius Christiansen and the St. Olaf Choir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944), 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Available sources omit first name.

were provided by a wealthy family friend of no relation: Jørgen Christiansen.<sup>4</sup> The violin quickly became his favorite instrument and he made his performing debut, at the age of 12, when he played a violin solo, assisted by his piano teacher. Hansen, an energetic musician and central musical force in Larvik, was trained in the classical tradition. An organist, pianist, cellist, conductor, and composer, he was incredibly influential on young Christiansen and the community. Leola Nelson Bergmann, an early Christiansen biographer wrote:

To Oscar Hansen must go the credit of initiating Christiansen into the classical tradition of music. Trained in the spirit of the German classics in Leipzig and Christiania, Hansen through his teaching and directing inculcated very early in Christiansen a feeling for the musical style of the great masters.”<sup>5</sup>

Hansen directed bands at the glassworks and the flour mill, conducted three singing societies, and organized a community orchestra and a summer band. He was also the organist at Larvik Trinity Church, where fourteen-year-old Christiansen took over as organist during Hansen’s 1885 sabbatical to study in Leipzig.<sup>6</sup>

After contracting tuberculosis, birthing six children and losing three of them, Oleana Christiansen became frail. She was soon bed-ridden and died in 1885. Restless from a collapsing family circle and troubled about the future, Melius’ eldest brother, Karl, left his home for America. F. Melius remained in Larvik and was confirmed in the Lutheran tradition at the age of 16. In an effort to support himself, he secured a small studio where he taught lessons, did copying work, and composed for small bands.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Eugene E. Simpson, *A History of St. Olaf Choir* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1921), 121.

<sup>5</sup> Bergmann, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>7</sup> Shaw, 38.

### *The American Dream*

Motivated by the limited prospects of a musical career in Larvik and the approaching re-marriage of his father, Melius decided to join his brother and two uncles in America. In the fall of 1888, Christiansen, at the age of 17, traveled alone by boat to New York City and then by train to Oakland, California, where one of his uncles resided. He studied the English language and made every effort to acclimate himself to the life and ways of his new world. Unfortunately, employment prospects as a professional musician were scarce, so F. Melius accepted his brother's invitation and gift of money for a train ticket to Wisconsin. Believing the chance of beginning a musical career to be better among the Norwegian immigrants of Wisconsin than in California, he arrived in Washburn in February of 1889.<sup>8</sup>

Upon settling in Washburn, F. Melius continued his English studies, played baritone in Karl's Scandinavian band, and placed an advertisement for a music position in the *Skandinaven*, a Norwegian-American newspaper.<sup>9</sup> Of three offers in Eau Claire, La Crosse, and Marinette, he chose to lead the Scandinavian Band in Marinette. His rationale was if, by some chance, he was unsuccessful, Christiansen could simply walk across the bridge to the neighboring city of Menominee, Michigan.<sup>10</sup>

Christiansen arrived in Marinette in the fall of 1890 and quickly established a reputation of ability and dedication. He accepted the post of organist and choir master at Our Savior's Lutheran Church and soon began to teach applied lessons in piano, violin,

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<sup>8</sup> Shaw, 38-40.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>10</sup> Bergmann, 34.

and organ.<sup>11</sup> He earned his room and board with the prominent Prescott family by giving piano lessons to the two children.

One of them, Sadie, appeared in one of F. Melius' organ recitals as vocal soloist, and to her he dedicated his first published composition, "Bonny Castle Waltzes," named after the home the Prescotts were building on Lake Superior.<sup>12</sup>

His two years in Marinette were successful but in the summer of 1892, Christiansen hosted a male vocal quartet from Augsburg Seminary. Their musical performance inspired him to move to Minneapolis, enroll, and pursue his dream of becoming an advanced musician and concert violinist. In addition to practicing, performing, and teaching violin, F. Melius taught a class in singing and theory in addition to directing the Augsburg Seminary Chorus. During this time, Christiansen first composed songs for the voice by setting the poems of his friend, Hans Andreas Urseth.<sup>13</sup>

In 1893, following one year at Augsburg Seminary, F. Melius enrolled in the Northwestern Conservatory of Music, a University of Minnesota affiliate. Christiansen focused on violin, piano, harmony, and counterpoint while continuing to teach at Augsburg, give private violin lessons, and serve as Trinity Lutheran's organist and choir director. He graduated at the top of his 70-member class in May of 1894 and joined the Augsburg vocal quartet's summer tour. Bergmann wrote, "Christiansen's contribution as the first bass was not outstanding, but his general musicianship was valuable to the group and his violin solos lent variety to their concerts."<sup>14</sup> The four members divided their twelve-hundred-dollar summer income equally.

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<sup>11</sup> Shaw, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>13</sup> Bergmann, 51; Shaw, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 60.

As Christiansen's student chorus at Augsburg and church choir at Trinity began to draw regional recognition, F. Melius established a special ensemble called *Nordlyset*, or "North-light." In 1894, he and Hans Urseth produced a collection of choir songs entitled *12 Korsange*, and later, a monthly songbook, labeled *Sangserie*, which included original compositions, excerpts from oratorios, and arrangements of Scandinavian hymns.<sup>15</sup>

Following the 1897 summer wedding of F. Melius Christiansen and Edith Lindem of Marinette, Wisconsin, the newlyweds and brother, Karl, departed for the Royal Conservatory of Music in Leipzig via a summer vacation in Larvik.<sup>16</sup> Melius' primary study was in violin with teacher Hans Sitt. He also focused on piano with Alois Reckendorf and composition with the cantor of the *Thomasschule*, Gustav Schreck.<sup>17</sup> Professor Schreck had an immense impact on Christiansen's developing musicianship and "helped materially in formulating his philosophy and musical style."<sup>18</sup>

Schreck made his significant impact on Christiansen's choral development....Under his teacher's guidance, F. Melius examined the influence of folk music on church music and wrote harmonies in contrapuntal style for about seventy familiar chorales.<sup>19</sup>

Halfway through his study in Leipzig, the Christiansens welcomed the arrival of a son, Elmer, in the spring of 1898. Due to his thorough preparation in theory at Northwestern, F. Melius was able to graduate from the Royal Conservatory of Music in only two years, and received his diploma in the spring of 1899. Though the original plan was to settle in Norway after their time in Leipzig, the Christiansens returned to the

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<sup>15</sup> Bergmann, 62-64.

<sup>16</sup> Shaw, 51-52.

<sup>17</sup> Simpson, 127-128.

<sup>18</sup> Oscar R. Overby, "Salute to a Giant," *Lutheran Herald* 35 (April 10, 1951), 359.

<sup>19</sup> Bergmann, 105; Shaw, 53.



United States. F. Melius left his young family in Marinette to live with Edith's parents and he returned to Minneapolis to resume his musical career. He secured employment as a member of the string faculty of Northwestern Conservatory and soon became the Department Chair. Christiansen returned to the organ bench of Trinity Lutheran Church, and later Bethany Lutheran, and played violin for the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. He accepted the position of director of the Norwegian male singing society known as the *Kjerulf Club*. Through this casual social group turned disciplined singing organization, F. Melius met and befriended the extraordinary bass, Paul G. Schmidt, who would later influence Christiansen's path to St. Olaf College.<sup>20</sup>

After the birth of their second son, Jacobi, the Christiansens fully intended to make Minneapolis their permanent home, so F. Melius moved his wife and family to the city in the spring of 1900.<sup>21</sup> The family continued to grow with the birth of a third son, Olaf, in August of 1901 and a daughter, Edith Signora, in June of 1903. However, tragedy struck the family with the death of their eldest son, Elmer, who died of spinal meningitis in 1902 and again in 1908 when Edith Signora died from peritonitis. Christiansen's wife, Edith, would later birth three more children: Carl (b. 1911), Paul (b. 1914), and Elsa (b. 1920). Disaster visited the family once again in the summer of 1921 when the vehicle in which Mrs. Christiansen and son, Carl, were riding was struck by a streetcar and burst into flames. Edith slowly recovered from her burns but Carl lived for only one day.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Shaw, 54-55.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>22</sup> Bergmann, 130.

The surviving Christiansen children would go on to form life-long relationships with Lutheran higher education and choral music in Minnesota. Jacobi, known as Jake, served as the Athletic Director and head football coach at Concordia College, Moorhead, a sister school to St. Olaf College. Olaf Christiansen followed in his father's footsteps by assuming leadership of the music department and the St. Olaf Choir upon F. Melius' retirement. Paul J. Christiansen directed the Concordia Choir and Elsa married and traveled with Kurt Wycisk, manager of Paul's acclaimed ensemble.

### *St. Olaf College*

When President John Nathan Kildahl of St. Olaf College was granted permission to hire a music director for his Northfield, MN campus in 1903, he approached Paul G. Schmidt for a recommendation. Regarding his first impression of F. Melius, Schmidt recalls:

From the first rehearsal I attended, I came to have great respect and admiration for Mr. Christiansen. His passionate striving for perfection in his interpretations and presentations gave me a new insight in the power of song. Needless to say, I never missed a rehearsal.<sup>23</sup>

In response to Kildahl's search, Schmidt wrote:

Invariably he would mention the problem that was of so much concern to him at the time—whom he could engage as music director at the college. He asked us if we knew of anyone who was capable and who in other respects would be the right man for the place. It was then only natural for me to suggest the man for whom I had learned to have very great respect, my friend in Minneapolis, the director of the Kjerulf Male Chorus, F. Melius Christiansen. President Kildahl did not know him, but agreed to go to Minneapolis to meet him and talk matters over with him.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Paul G. Schmidt, *My Years at St. Olaf* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1967), 21-22.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

Christiansen accepted Kildahl's offer of employment, agreeing to a trial year and part-time position to include head of the music department, director of the band and chorus, applied violin and music theory. President Kildahl was so impressed with Christiansen's inaugural year that he bestowed the rank of full professor to F. Melius and awarded a salary increase of four hundred dollars. This was apparently enough security for Christiansen as he moved his family to a little house on St. Olaf Avenue in the summer of 1904.<sup>25</sup>

The St. Olaf Band was at the top of Christiansen's agenda in the first years at the college. Prior to F. Melius' appointment, the social-centered group enjoyed playing music as a distraction from the rules of the Lutheran institution, which included the prohibition of dancing, drinking and card playing. The former band leader instructed the boys to play a piece from the beginning through to the end, without pause, in hopes that it would eventually take some musical shape. This approach did not work for Christiansen and he drilled the ensemble, working toward perfection one short phrase at a time.<sup>26</sup> Though not immediately embraced by the student body, Christiansen did earn his pupils' respect and admiration.

The St. Olaf Band improved significantly and quickly grew in quality and quantity under F. Melius' leadership. He led the ensemble on a tour to Norway in 1906 and when the band members returned to America at the conclusion, Christiansen travelled to Leipzig to revive his compositional study with mentor, Gustav Schreck. Melius' interest in solo violin performance was therefore redirected to ensemble development and composition.

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<sup>25</sup> Shaw, 58-59.

<sup>26</sup> Bergmann, 93-94.

Prior to the construction of Boe Memorial Chapel, St. Olaf's campus worship facility, the student body and faculty would gather at St. John's Church in Northfield. The Christiansens joined the congregation in 1905 and F. Melius began conducting its 15-member choir. President Kildahl was the pastor and the trustees consisted of St. Olaf faculty. After imploring the youthful energy and skills of the student body, the church choir quickly grew to fifty members.

Christiansen discovered an absence of high quality choral literature for his new choir, as St. John's lacked a choral library and new music was too expensive to purchase.

His biographer, Bergmann, comments:

Here again, as had often happened in his work, Christiansen found himself face to face with a deplorable lack of suitable music. The days of substantial music libraries in the churches and colleges of this region had not yet arrived; nor were there means to secure them. Providing music had become part of Christiansen's job. Songs that he had written for men's voices he now arranged for mixed voices, and to them he added new songs in increasing numbers.<sup>27</sup>

Just as his previous church employment demanded, F. Melius continued to compose and arrange as needed. Though the date of composition is unknown, the chorale, *Lamb of God*, was sung in Norwegian at Christiansen's inaugural service in 1907 and both *Praise to the Lord* and *Beautiful Savior* were performed in a concert at St. John's Church in the winter of 1911.<sup>28</sup> These arrangements continue to be standards in Lutheran *a cappella* choral music.

Previous scholarship suggests that the St. John's Church Choir was the sole beginning of the St. Olaf Choir.<sup>29</sup> However, Bergmann lists five situations that influenced

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<sup>27</sup> Bergmann, 100.

<sup>28</sup> Shaw, 106-107.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 96.

the formation of the St. Olaf Choir. First and foremost was Christiansen's work with the St. John's Choir and its own history which can be traced to 1875. The choir consisted of St. Olaf students and older members of the congregation for a period of thirty years prior to Professor Christiansen's arrival in 1905. According to various reports, the previously average choir thrived under its new leader. Second was the result of a tour by the St. Olaf Octet in 1908. This summer tour to Minnesota, South Dakota, and Iowa drew regional attention to both the College and the singing of Lutheran chorales. Christiansen's artistic growth and recognition as a composer and conductor is a third note as well as the fourth point which includes the series of song services created by Christiansen and President Kildahl. These services were held at St. John's Lutheran Church from 1907 to 1914. They included several of Christiansen's well-known arrangements and were the precursor to the St. Olaf Choir Series. The positive response to these later published booklets demonstrated the growing appeal for high quality choral music in the Norwegian Lutheran church community. Lastly, his continued leadership of the St. Olaf Band is significant as it expanded his experience as a musician and teacher.<sup>30</sup>

The first appearance of "The St. Olaf Choir" was in the spring of 1912 when a tour of a forty-five member choral ensemble departed for Minneapolis, Eau Claire, Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago. The choir consisted of St. Olaf students and faculty, and members of St. John's Lutheran Church.<sup>31</sup> The concert program for the inaugural tour included twelve sacred anthems, eight of which were sung in Norwegian,

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<sup>30</sup> Bergmann, 115; Shaw, 96-97.

<sup>31</sup> Shaw, 107-108.

interspersed with two addresses by Rev. John Nathan Kildahl, President of St. Olaf College.<sup>32</sup>

The choir toured again in June of 1912 to Fargo, ND after accepting an invitation to sing at the annual assembly of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church. Concerts were given on the way to and from Fargo.<sup>33</sup>

The Fargo tour provided contact with two Norwegian church leaders who suggested a choir trip to the motherland. After eleven guarantors were secured, J. Jørgen Thompson, a St. Olaf faculty member, travelled to Norway in March of 1913 to make arrangements, and the choir followed on June 13<sup>th</sup>. The eleven-day train ride from Northfield to New York City was interrupted by concerts in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Brooklyn. The *Christianiafford* sailed on June 24<sup>th</sup> and reached Bergen, Norway on July 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>34</sup>

The successful trips of 1912 and 1913 solidified the tradition of an annual choir tour at St. Olaf College. This important tradition brought public attention to the college, the choir, Christiansen, and his compositions as never before.

By far the most important tour of the St. Olaf Choir, since the memorable trip to Europe in 1913, was the spring tour of 1920. This afforded an opportunity of realizing a long-cherished desire on the part of both director and manager, namely, to bring the Choir to the larger American cities of the East.<sup>35</sup>

Christiansen's contemporary, John Finley Williamson, heard the St. Olaf Choir for the first time during this tour and later acknowledged F. Melius for "providing the inspiration

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<sup>32</sup> 1912 concert program.

<sup>33</sup> A. G. Aker, "The June Tour," *Viking* '13 '14 '15, 155-156.

<sup>34</sup> Shaw, 110-112.

<sup>35</sup> *The Viking 1922-1923*, 133.

and encouragement that led to the founding of the Westminster Choir.”<sup>36</sup> The 1920 tour introduced the choir to a revised name, the St. Olaf Lutheran Choir, and to major cities east of the Mississippi River including Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, Rochester, Cincinnati, and Detroit. The critics raved about the choir and one representative wrote:

It is a group of young people, all of them letter-perfect, pitch-perfect, tone-perfect, text-perfect in the most difficult classic choral music, singing absolutely from memory and without accompaniment, even without the opening assurance of the diapason or tuning-fork. Their director, Mr. Christiansen, gets effects unlike those produced by any other like organization heard in these parts. The pianissimo is of wonderful tenuity, fine-spun as silk, yet never lacking in musical quality. Their dynamics are their own and the ensemble effects quite flawless. Their concert was one of the rarest expositions of the superlative in choral singing.<sup>37</sup>

The success of the 1920 eastern tour established the reputation of F. Melius Christiansen and the St. Olaf Lutheran Choir on the national musical scene.<sup>38</sup>

Other milestones for Christiansen and his choir included the inaugural western tour of 1924-25 and the building of a new music hall in 1926. The earnings from the annual tours of the early 1920s allowed the choir to contribute over a third of the total cost of the new building.<sup>39</sup> The next decade brought the first southern tour, an invitation to represent the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America in Trondheim at the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the medieval king who brought Christianity to Norway – Olav Haraldsson, and an invitation from the city of Augsburg, Germany to perform in the 400<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Anton Armstrong, “The Musical Legacy of F. Melius Christiansen,” *Choral Journal* 37, no. 4 (November 1996): 14.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Schmidt, 67-68.

<sup>38</sup> Shaw, 136.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

anniversary of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>40</sup> During this time period, Christiansen and the choir had a significant influence on the *a cappella* choral movement in America.

Bergmann wrote, “Throughout the thirties the appearances of the choir in the principal cities of America drew audiences of increasing size. Enthusiasm for *a cappella* singing mounted; directors and singers were eager to learn proper techniques.”<sup>41</sup>

The first performance of the long-standing tradition, known as the St. Olaf Christmas Festival, was held in Hoyme Memorial Chapel in 1912. The festival was moved to the gymnasium in 1922 in order to accommodate the growing audience and provide performance space for the St. Olaf Orchestra. The annual event continued to grow in size and number of performances until there were four concerts in 1949, hosting about 2,300 audience members each. The program moved to the newly built Skoglund Athletic Center in 1967, accommodating approximately 15,000 people over four performances. The Festival was first televised in 1975 under the artistic direction of Kenneth Jennings and has evolved into a multi-media production involving over 500 student performers and five conductors.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Influence and Legacy***

The Christiansen Choral School, an intense two-week summer course held in a vacation-like site, began in 1935 in Winona Lake, Indiana, and continued, semi-annually, for nine years. Olaf, F. Melius’ son, co-founded the Choral School and often was assisted by one of two high school choral education experts: Carol M. Pitts (1935-1939) and Peter

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<sup>40</sup> Schmidt, 80-81.

<sup>41</sup> Bergmann, 143.

<sup>42</sup> Shaw, 592-602.



Tkach (1940-1943). Over half of the attendees were high school choral directors with the remainder being equally church choir directors and collegiate conductors. They came from throughout the continental United States, including Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana, to study F. Melius' pedagogy and gain an understanding of his choral techniques.<sup>43</sup> It was billed as *A Master Course for Choral Directors of College, Church and School*.

We agree that the last session was an even greater inspiration and help in our profession than the first one we attended, and we thought that the first one couldn't be surpassed... We are all keyed up for the one to come—will be there with 'empty buckets' and will come away with them filled to overflowing."<sup>44</sup>

Christiansen received honorary Doctor of Music degrees from the University of Minnesota, Capital University, Oberlin Conservatory, and Muhlenberg College. He also had been made the Commander of the Order of St. Olaf by the King of Norway in 1926. F. Melius remained devoted to St. Olaf College and the St. Olaf Choir while continuing to maintain and refine the choir's reputation and mission. However, as he approached his seventies, F. Melius prepared for a replacement in choral leadership. In 1941, he chose his son, Olaf, as associate conductor of the St. Olaf Lutheran Choir and they co-directed the ensemble for two years. At the time of his retirement, F. Melius Christiansen had lived the American dream and built a musical empire. American Public Media states:

By the time he retired in 1941, F. Melius Christiansen had been knighted by the King of Norway, granted four honorary doctorates, and lauded in a book about his life. He was by then a much sought-after speaker and conductor, had composed or arranged more than 600 songs, and had directed his beloved St. Olaf Choir before kings, emperors, and United States presidents.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Bergmann, 176-179.

<sup>44</sup> Cited in Bergmann, 180.

<sup>45</sup> American Public Media, "The Legacy of the St. Olaf Choir," St. Paul Sunday, [http://saintpaulsunday.publicradio.org/featured\\_artists/stolafhistory.html](http://saintpaulsunday.publicradio.org/featured_artists/stolafhistory.html) [accessed May 27, 2010].

“Christy,” as he was affectionately called by his closest friends and family, suffered a stroke in 1952 and remained in poor health, often bedridden. He passed away in May of 1955. Christiansen succeeded in establishing his own school of choral thought and many choirs, collegiate, community, and high school, try to emulate the sound ideal, traditions, and practices of the St. Olaf Choir. Richard S. Davis of the *Milwaukee Journal* wrote, “Certainly no man has done more to raise the standards of choral music. For generations to come, the effect of his devoted service will surely be felt.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Cited in Shaw, 221.

## CHAPTER 2. THE ORATORIO

### *The Prodigal Son*

*The Prodigal Son* is a sacred work in sixteen movements, divided into two parts. It is scored for SATB soli and SATB chorus with orchestra or keyboard accompaniment. Composed in 1918 and labeled a sacred cantata by Augsburg Publishing House, the work includes forty minutes of music with time allowed for a twenty-minute sermon to be inserted between Parts I and II.<sup>47</sup> All texts were selected from scripture by Reverend J. N. Kildahl, second President of St. Olaf College. Kildahl and Christiansen collaborated on seven Song Services between 1907 and 1916, which were used for devotional evenings of music at the college.

This work is dedicated to Professor M. O. Bøckman in recognition of his “distinguished services as a Biblical scholar, an inspiring teacher of theology and a leader in American church life.”<sup>48</sup> *The Prodigal Son* was first performed on April 28 and 29, 1918 in Hoyme Memorial Chapel, the center for worship at St. Olaf College from 1906-1923. The composer conducted the combined St. Olaf choirs and the St. Olaf Orchestra, and Kildahl delivered the sermon.<sup>49</sup> The oratorio was performed at least two more times - the first on May 16, 1920 featuring the St. Olaf College Choral Union and the St. Olaf Orchestra with J. Arndt Bergh conducting and Reverend Martin Norstad delivering the address.<sup>50</sup> Another performance was held on April 29, 1951 in celebration of F. Melius

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<sup>47</sup> F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1918), Preface.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>49</sup> Concert program, April 28-29, 1918, St. Olaf College Archives.

<sup>50</sup> Concert program, May 16, 1920, St. Olaf College Archives.

Christiansen's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. This concert was conducted by Paul Ensrud, director of the St. Olaf Chapel Choir, and the sermon was omitted.<sup>51</sup>

*The Prodigal Son* possesses qualities of both an oratorio and a cantata, including a libretto of religious character, the choice of performing forces, a church or concert hall as a possible performance venue, and lack of scenery, costumes, or blocking. There are no specific characters listed but the libretto seems to associate the baritone with the narrator and the father, and the tenor with the son. The score is labeled a sacred cantata but Christiansen's use of alternating forces – recitative, aria, and chorus – and the length of the work suggest an oratorio.

*The Prodigal Son* includes sixteen movements and is labeled by Christiansen, as seen in Figure 1.

<p><b><i>The Prodigal Son, 1918</i></b></p> <p><b>Part I</b></p> <p>1. Overture 2. Baritone Recitative and Chorus 3. Soprano (Recitative and Arioso) and Chorus 4. Baritone Recitative 5. Baritone and Tenor Recitative 6. Chorus 7. Baritone Recitative 8. Alto and Chorus 9. Tenor Recitative 10. Chorus</p> <p><b>Part II</b></p> <p>11. Baritone Recitative and Arioso 12. Baritone and Tenor Recitative 13. Chorus 14. Tenor 15. Ladies' Chorus 16. Chorus</p>
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Figure 1. Individual movements as labeled by the composer, *The Prodigal Son*.

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<sup>51</sup> Shaw, 304; Concert program, April 29, 1951, St. Olaf College Archives.

The first movement is the Overture in D minor. It is divided into four sections in which the last three are labeled, “May be omitted.” The introduction, marked *maestoso*, is eighteen measures long, in common time, and presents the primary melodic theme (Example 1). This theme outlines a range of a perfect fourth and primarily features stepwise motion.

Example 1. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 1 (Overture), primary melodic theme (mm. 1-8).

ORCHESTRA

*Maestoso* ♩ = 60



The A major cadence, in measure 18, allows the performer the choice to either continue into the *allegro* of the Overture or move directly into the second movement.

The “may be omitted” portion of the Overture, measures 19-252, is in ternary form and triple meter. The melodic theme of the A section, measures 19-107, is twelve measures long and features the strings and oboe (Example 2).

Example 2. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 1 (Overture), melodic material (mm. 19-30).

*Allegro, non troppo* ♩ = 132 (MAY BE OMITTED)

STRINGS

The composer uses measures 31-49 for motivic development by repeating the melody, first presented by the woodwinds in measures 31-42. The brass continue the development of material, in sequence, in measures 43-49. A counter-theme is introduced by the oboe in measures 63-66 and becomes the focus of the remainder of the section (Example 3).

Example 3. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 1 (Overture), counter-theme (mm. 63-66).



Measures 95-96 include a three-note motive, in the cello, that will later unite sections A and B (Example 4).

Example 4. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 1 (Overture), three-note motive (mm. 95-96).

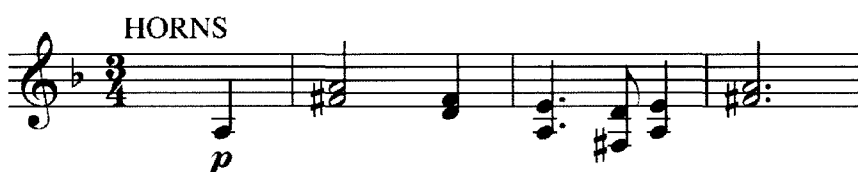


The B section, measures 108-178, is fugal. The subject is presented by the first violin in measures 108-109 (Example 5) and based on the three-note motive introduced in the A section by the cellos (Example 4). The second violin states the answer in measures 110-111 (Example 5). The answer is tonal as it differs in intervallic structure. After



Movement 2, *Behold What Manner of Love*, is a short baritone recitative followed by a chorus. Marked *amabile* (amiable, lovable), the baritone entrance is preceded by twelve measures of instrumental introduction in triple meter and with minimal dynamic contrast. The recitative and chorus are built on the same melodic material which is introduced by the horns in D major (Example 6).

Example 6. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 2, introduction (mm. 1-4).



Beginning in measure 9, the composer prepares the listener's ear for the tonal center of F major. A second-inversion triad in the new tonic prepares the baritone's single line of text from Luke 15:11. Christiansen sets this text in a declamatory style and continues directly into the chorus.

The chorus has four sections, each marked by a new tempo marking, key center and different line of text from 1 John 3:1. The first section, measures 18-33, features an imitative writing style beginning with the sopranos and altos (Example 7). Additionally, the soprano material is a restatement of the melodic theme that was introduced by the horns at the beginning of the movement (Example 6). The restatement is presented in F major, at a slightly faster tempo, in a new meter, and within a thinner texture. The altos heighten the melodic interest by presenting a tonally altered version of the second horn part in imitation (Example 7).



Example 7. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 2, chorus (mm. 1-3).

SOPRANO

*p*

Be - hold what man - ner of love, \_\_\_\_\_ be - hold what man - ner of

ALTO

Be - hold what man - ner of love, \_\_\_\_\_

Christiansen continues to set the biblical text syllabically in the second section, measures 34-70. It is marked *allegro ma non tanto* (*allegro*, but not too much) and the composer uses both imitative and homophonic textures. The new melodic idea features an ascending perfect fourth followed by a descending line. For rhythmic intensity and variety, the composer uses a duplet within a 6/8 meter. The orchestral accompaniment begins with a unison texture in the trumpets and horns while the full orchestra joins in measure 35. Though the entire section is marked *forte*, the use of alternating forces (groups of instrumental colors and *tutti*) creates a variety of dynamic and timbre contrast. Christiansen uses a rhythmically contrasting, ascending scalar motive, in the upper instruments, in measures 36, 39, 43, 46, 52, and 58.

Measures 71-86 make up the third section and contain a modified return of the text, music, key, and tempo from the first section, measures 18-33. This leads directly into the closing section, measures 87-101, which is marked *allegro ma non troppo* and features text from the second section, measures 34-70, and music based on the opening theme (Example 6).

Movement 3, *Blessed Are They That Dwell in Thy House*, features a soprano recitative (measures 1-11) and arioso (measures 12-81). The accompaniment is scored for full orchestra. The recitative is through-composed and modulates from F major to D major. The melodic writing combines a chant-like quality with arpeggiated descending triads. The text is from Psalm 119:9-10.

The arioso is in D major and ternary form, with a coda. A choral response on the text, “Selah,” which means to “stop and listen,” is used after each phrase of the solo. Christiansen presents a melodic idea, introduced by the strings in measure 12, and restated, in variation, by the strings and horns in measure 32, the strings and soprano in measure 49, and the flutes and soprano in measure 53.

The text of the arioso is taken from Psalm 84:4 and 10, and is set in a primarily syllabic manner. The exception includes the melismatic treatment of the word “praise” in measures 25 and 61. One example of text painting can be found in measure 41 where the composer sets the text “house of my God” to an ascending scalar passage, symbolizing heaven. Another lies in measures 43-44 where Christiansen sets the word “wickedness” on a descending octave, symbolizing the descent into hell.

During the soprano solo, the orchestral texture is thick with the occasional use of extended ranges, dramatic tremolos, and independent material. During the choral passages, however, the orchestral accompaniment is simple and homophonic. This compositional choice compliments the animated homophony in the choir. The thinnest texture occurs in the opening recitative when the composer sets the soprano entrance *a cappella* in measures 5-6. He uses this same technique in the final choral response in

measures 79-81. Additionally, the rhythm is straightforward and simplistic while the overall dynamic contrast ranges from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*.

*Every Man Is Tempted*, movement 4, is a dramatic baritone recitative which includes eight contrasting expressive markings and is through-composed. The tonal center is C major and the overall mood ranges from fear and contrition to reverent. The four-measure orchestral introduction originates in the initial measures of the Overture. This unison presentation of the primary melodic theme (Example 1) is followed by a descending scalar passage in the voice. The composer creates a dialogue between the baritone and the orchestra in measures 9-17. In measure 14, Christiansen uses text painting to expressively convey the “roaring” of the lion by inserting a melismatic passage. The overall texture is thin while the accompaniment is most often doubled in octaves.

The orchestra foreshadows the son’s life of temptation and evil in an instrumental interlude in measures 18-35, which is based on an ascending chromatic scale. The texture is more dense and Christiansen uses string *tremolo* to symbolize terror and danger. The rhythmic energy changes abruptly at the *piu allegro* in measure 24. Three block chords in measures 24-26 symbolize the arrival of Satan. The separated eighth notes that follow, beginning in measure 27, signify the initial seduction of evil. In measures 31-35, the rhythmic energy changes to rapid triplets in the higher-pitched instruments.

The melodic material used in the last section of the movement, measures 36-70, is the primary theme of the Overture (Example 1). It is stated, in the voice, in measures 41-42 (marked *forte* and *maestoso ma allegro*) and in measures 61-62 (marked *piano* and *tranquillo*).

The librettist, J. N. Kildahl, selected the text from four different biblical sources: James 1:14, 1 Peter 5:8, 2 Corinthians 11:14, and Ephesians 6:11-12. Though the text is primarily set syllabically, the composer uses additional text painting and a change of tonality from A major to C major, to describe Satan's transformation into an angel of light in measures 38-39. Christiansen achieves this by using an ascending triplet pattern, along with flutes and clarinets in their high range, on the word "light." In measures 41-42, the composer sets the text, "whole armour of God," in the brass and cymbals and on a homophonic root-position triad. This instrumentation and texture symbolize strength and solidarity.

The fifth movement, *And the Younger of Them*, is a recitative for baritone and tenor soli. The composer transitions from C major to E-flat major during the instrumental introduction, measures 1-12, which is scored for strings and woodwinds. The recitative is through-composed and features text from Luke 15:12-13. In this biblical passage, two characters present the story of the prodigal son's request for inheritance and departure. In this movement, the narrator is sung by the baritone and the son is performed by the tenor.

In the first two measures of the movement, the oboe echoes the primary melodic theme of the Overture (Example 1). The woodwinds and strings proceed to present a dance-like introduction with a youthful character. The musical style is altered abruptly at the *con sentimento* section, in measure 13, when the composer changes the meter from common time to triple and the key center to E-flat major. He also slows down the rhythmic energy and expands the instrumental color by adding horns. This prepares the listener for the baritone entrance in measure 16. The text is declamatory and syllabic. Christiansen uses text painting in measures 31-32 when he sets the word "far" to the

longest rhythmic value in the vocal line. This symbolizes the length of distance between the boy's home and the foreign country for which he departs.

The sixth movement is a chorus entitled *Let Us Break Their Bands Asunder*. This movement is unique, in comparison to the first five movements, as it contains only one expressive marking, *straziente et marcato* (agonizing and marked), and one tempo marking in which the quarter note equals 116 beats per minute. The form is binary. The A section, measures 1-33, is in E minor while the B section, measures 38-69, moves between E major and G major. Measures 34-37 include transitional material characterized by a sixteenth-note pattern in the strings and woodwinds.

Two melodic ideas are presented in the A section. The first is introduced by the orchestra in measure 1 and expanded by the chorus and orchestra, in unison, in measures 5-8 (Example 8). This is the only syncopated theme in the oratorio.

Example 8. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 6, first melodic idea (m. 1).



The opening material, along with the remainder of the movement, is marked *forte* and *fortissimo*. These dynamic markings and the rhythmic energy of syncopation, provide a majestic and decisive character to the opening theme. The second melodic idea is presented by the basses in measure 10 and outlines a G major triad (Example 9).

Example 9. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 6, second melodic idea (m. 10).



In measures 21-22, the melodic material is rhythmically embellished with the use of a triplet. The composer uses melismatic passages in the soprano and alto to enhance the words “eat,” “drink,” and “merry” in measures 29-30 and 33. These are examples of text painting and contrast the overall declamatory style of the movement.

The B section, measures 38-69, begins in E major with a unison texture in the voices. The melodic material for this section originates in the basses in measures 10-12 (Example 9). Measures 38-49 are homophonic with occasional animation. However, beginning with the basses in measure 50, the composer uses imitation for variety. The altos are in imitation in measure 51 while the tenors follow in measure 52 and the sopranos in measure 54. This texture, in alternation with homophony, continues through the end of the movement. In order to evoke drama and treachery, Christiansen uses *tremolo* in the lower strings in measures 50-54 and 58-61. The final measure is marked *attacca* and leads directly into the following movement.

Movement 7, *And He Wasted His Substance*, is a baritone recitative which features a florid orchestral introduction in measures 1-14. The melodic material, presented by the bassoons in measures 1-2 (Example 10), draws from the second theme of movement 6 (Example 9).

Example 10. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 7, melodic theme (m. 1).

**Con brio** ♩ = 120

BASSOONS



Christiansen uses instrumental color to contrast and add interest, passing the theme from the bassoons to the trombones, then to the horns and trumpets and a final statement in the tuba. This symbolizes the son's ever-present temptations and the wandering from one vice to another. Above this theme, the strings play a florid scalar passage comprised of several sequences, which symbolizes the son's riotous lifestyle.

The baritone sings in alternation with the orchestra as it responds with a lament-like descending chromatic scalar passage in measures 16-22 (Example 11). Between the baritone statements from Luke 15:13-16, in declamatory style, the orchestra plays the unusually slow and contrasting passage, scored for bassoons and double bass and clarinets and oboes. This is an example of Christiansen's use of orchestra writing to enhance drama and musically show the descent into hell.

Example 11. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 7 (mm. 16-22).

BASSOONS and STRING BASS      CLARINET and OBOE

A similar descending chromatic passage is repeated by the strings and woodwinds in measures 24-29. The final eight measures of the movement feature an orchestral closing in the strings and horns and recall the chromatic descending bass line from measures 24-29. Marked *attacca*, the recitative transitions directly into the following movement.

*Awake, Thou That Sleepest* is the title of the eighth movement, which is scored for alto solo and chorus. This movement is one of the most expressive pieces in the oratorio and though Christiansen labels it as a solo, it has characteristics of an aria. The slow tempo (*adagio espressivo*) and key center of D-flat major assist in the expressive quality. The movement is in ternary form.

The A section, measures 1-23, includes a lyric melody which is introduced by the alto soloist in measures 1-12 (Example 12). This melodic material is repeated in imitation by the altos and tenors of the chorus in measures 11 and 12 respectively. The long theme alternates between D-flat major and B-flat minor.

Example 12. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 8, lyric melody (mm. 1-12).

**Adagio espressivo**  $\text{♩} = 48$

ALTO

*p*

A wake, thou that sleep est and a rise from the

dead and Christ shall give thee light, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ and Christ shall give \_\_\_\_\_ thee light



The composer marks the B section, measures 24-56, *piu mosso* and indicates a faster tempo. It is set for the soloist only, with no participation from the chorus. The orchestral accompaniment features the horns and strings and is simplistic and supportive, often doubling the melodic line. Measures 47-56 provide an instrumental transition and prepare the listener for the return of the opening material.

The return of the A section occurs in measures 57-80 followed by a short coda beginning in measure 81. This segment features the alto soloist and strings. The orchestration is set entirely in the treble clef until measure 63 when the full orchestral range returns. The soprano, tenor, and bass voices of the chorus provide a full homophonic texture around the alto melody in measures 67-80. The alto solo doubles the altos of the chorus beginning in measure 70 and returns to the solo role, independent of the choir, in measure 81. The full chorus supports the alto soloist harmonically and homophonically in the coda, measures 81-89.

The text featured in movement 8 is found in the New and Old Testaments of the King James Bible. Christiansen sets Ephesians 5:14 in the A sections and Ezekiel 33:11 in the B section. Both verses are set syllabically for clarity and declamation.

Part I concludes with the recitative-chorus pairing found in movements 9 and 10. The tenor recitative, *There Is No Soundness In My Flesh*, in E minor and portrays the son's plea and moment of repentance from Psalm 38:3-4 and Luke 15:17-19. Movement 9 is unique in that the orchestra introduces and accompanies the tenor recitative with a homophonic chorale-like passage. Beginning in measure 5, the tenor switches from *secco* to *arioso* and is in strict meter with the orchestral accompaniment. The form is through-composed. The text is set syllabically and the dynamic contrast is minimal.

The final movement of Part I, *Hear My Prayer*, is scored for SSATB chorus in F major. This five-part choral voicing is new and unusual for Christiansen within this large work. The form is ternary with the A section including measures 1-10. The B section, measures 11-21, is followed by A<sup>1</sup> in measures 21-36.

A simple, descending, four-note melody is presented by the orchestra in measures 1-2 and by the tenors in measure 2. It is passed throughout the five-part texture in imitation. The second line of the reverent prayer from Psalm 102:1-2 is set in a highly imitative manner, beginning in measure 10. Strict homophonic texture contrasts in measures 17-20. These four measures are unaccompanied, which symbolizes the unexposed nature of the text, “When I am in trouble, hide not Thy face.” Christiansen overlaps the cadence of the B section (measure 21) with the modified return of the A section. The orchestral accompaniment in measures 21-25 consists of rhythmically stagnant block chords over an F pedal. The composer interrupts the vocal imitation with homophonic texture in measure 27 and places the melody in the alto. This creates an expressive and reverent conclusion to Part I. According to the score, the movement may be followed by a sermon or address.

The first movement of Part II, *But God Who Is Rich In Mercy*, features a recitative and arioso for baritone. The dramatic mood is enhanced by the contrasting tempi of the two sections. The recitative is marked *con moto*, is through-composed, and declamatory in style. It begins in F minor and travels through C-sharp major and C-sharp minor before modulating to C major, the tonal center of the arioso.

The arioso is clearly structured in three parts and marked *andante cantabile*. As expected, the melodic line is more lyric with four-measure phrases throughout the A

sections, measures 1-12 and 25-36. In contrast, the B section, measures 13-24, presents four three-bar phrases but is equally as lyrical. It is interesting to note that the first four measures of the A sections are set entirely in the lower register of the orchestra.

Christiansen draws the text for the recitative from Ephesians 2:1-3; and for the arioso from Ephesians 2:4-5 and 13. It is set syllabically and the composer uses dynamic contrast for variety and emphasis.

Movement 12, *And He Arose*, is scored for baritone and tenor soli. This recitative features the narrator (baritone), the father (baritone), and the son (tenor). The composer divides this passage, the apex of the biblical story, into two sections. The first, measures 1-40, is in triple meter, marked *drammatico senza tempo esatto* (dramatic without exact time), and centered in D-flat major. The second section, measures 41-56, is marked *energico*, is in common time, and in D major. This movement draws its melodic material from the Overture, therefore connecting Parts I and II.

The instrumental introduction in measures 1-2 consists of a melodic fragment previously presented in movement 5 (Example 13). This relationship clarifies the composer's association of this material with the unity of the father and the son as movements 5 and 12 are the only two movements that feature these two characters together.

In contrast to the lyrical orchestral melody, the baritone line is disjunct and dramatic while the tenor section is slightly angular and highly chromatic. The text is from Luke 15:20-24 and set syllabically for clarity.

Example 13. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, comparison of melodic material from Mvt. 5 (mm. 14-15) and Mvt. 12 (mm. 1-2).

**Con sentimento** ♩ = 69

**Drammatico senza tempo esatto** ♩ = 66

A new melodic idea is introduced in the orchestra in measure 40, with full homophonic texture. This material originated in the first theme of the Overture (Example 1). The father's response to his son in measures 41-56 has a march-like character, which symbolizes the regal treatment of the returned son. The movement concludes with a brass fanfare and timpani roll.

*Who Is A God Like Unto Thee!* is the title of movement 13. This chorus is in the key of G major and structured in ternary form, with a coda. The movement is in triple meter and marked *moderato con moto*. The composer uses the dynamic markings of *mezzo forte* and *forte* with minimal contrast. Christiansen takes the text from Micah 7:18-19. It is set syllabically throughout.

The A sections, measures 1-29 and 61-85, feature the compositional technique of voice pairing. In order to heighten melodic interest, Christiansen uses imitation between the upper (soprano and alto) and lower (tenor and bass) voices (Example 14). Despite the

tritone in measure 6, the melody is singable and lyric. The melody presented in measures 6 and 7 appears again in the soprano, in augmentation, in measures 25-29.

Example 14. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 13, voice pairing in imitation (mm. 6-8).

The musical score for Example 14 shows two staves. The top staff is labeled 'SOPRANO and ALTO' and the bottom staff is labeled 'TENOR and BASS'. Both staves are in G major (one sharp). The top staff begins with a melodic phrase starting on G4, moving stepwise to D5, with lyrics 'Who is a God like un - to Thee, who'. The bottom staff begins with a similar melodic phrase starting on G3, moving stepwise to D4, with lyrics 'Who is a God like'. The music is marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

The B section, measures 30-60, is primarily homophonic and stepwise in motion. The meter changes to duple and the tempo increases. The orchestral accompaniment begins by doubling the male voices in octaves and remains simplistic and homophonic throughout the section. The composer uses a D dominant seventh chord in measures 56-60 to close the section and prepare for the return of the A section in G major.

In the return of the A section, the imitative texture of the chorus is interrupted by animated homophony in the coda, measures 86-98. The final cadence is unusual for the composer as it is scored in a low register, for all voices, and with the third in the soprano. Seemingly, Christiansen chose this voicing to enhance the text, “Who is.”

Movement 14, *I Love the Lord*, features the tenor soloist. It is centered in E minor until measure 65, where Christiansen modulates to E major and the coda begins. The movement is in ternary form with declamatory text drawn from Psalm 116:1-5.

This solo is more angular and rhythmic than any other in the oratorio. The melodic theme is presented by the orchestra in measures 1-2. The 11-measure vocal melody of the A section, measures 1-19, is divided into three phrases. The melodic material in the B section, measures 20-54, is divided into two parts by expressive marking and new text. The return of the A section, measures 55-65, is melodically exact but enhanced with increased rhythmic activity in the orchestral accompaniment.

Movement 15, *The Lord Is Full of Compassion*, is scored for four-part treble chorus (SSAA) with orchestra. It is labeled “Ladies’ Chorus” and is the only movement in rondo form, as labeled in Figure 2. The composer chooses a lighter texture and timbre in which to set the text about heaven and angels from Psalm 103 and Luke 15. The movement is in F major.

Section	Measures
A	9-20
B	21-40
A	41-54
C	55-69
A	70-81
B	82-101
A	102-116

Figure 2. Rondo form, Mvt. 15, *The Prodigal Son*.

The instrumental introduction in measures 1-8 has a clear arch shape which occurs over a C pedal. The sustained melody of the A section is comprised of steps, thirds, and fourths. It is homophonic and triadic, often combining the first and second altos in a unison texture, resulting in three-part voicing. The orchestral accompaniment is

rhythmically active throughout these sections with the exception of the final refrain in measures 102-116, where Christiansen uses unaccompanied texture to emphasize the angelic quality of the text (Example 15). This final statement is scored for eight select voices to be sung from a closed room, as indicated in the score. A three-measure coda, in the strings, closes the movement.

Example 15. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 15, a cappella texture (mm.102-119).

*Eight voices from closed room where this can be done.*

The score is written for eight voices (four staves) and piano accompaniment (two staves). The music is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. The lyrics are: "The Lord is full of com - pas - sion and gra - cious, slow to an - ger and plen - tous in mer - cy, in mer - cy." The piano accompaniment is marked *pp* and includes a section for Violins (*Viol's*) in the final measures.

The B section is in triple meter, which symbolizes the focus on the Trinity, heaven, and mercy. It also features a sustained, lyric melody. The orchestral accompaniment changes in these sections to feature grand arpeggios on the phrase, “heaven is high above the earth.” This is an example of Christiansen’s use of instrumental text painting and using the orchestra as an expressive device.

The central focus of the movement, the C section, has a joyous and regal quality with rhythmically active passages and sweeping melodic lines. The short, fanfare-like accompaniment enhances this quality. The composer uses vocal text painting on the word, “joy,” which is highly ornamented in the first soprano and second alto in measures 56 and 65 (Example 16). The woodwinds are featured in a short transition back to A in measures 67-69. In measure 68, they quote the women from measure 65, but in the new key.

Example 16. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 15, text painting (mm. 64-66).

WOMEN'S CHORUS

there is joy.

*The Prodigal Son* concludes with a choral movement for mixed voices entitled *Giving Thanks Unto The Father*. Movement 16 is through-composed and features a fugal



texture. This is not a complete fugue, however, due to the incomplete statement of the subject by the sopranos. Measures 64-100 are in a contrasting meter and marked *maestoso*. The movement is in C major and includes text from Colossians 1:12-13 and an added “Hallelujah” by the composer.

In the fugal writing, the four-measure subject is presented by the bass in measure 9 and doubled by the orchestra in measures 9-21. There are four statements of the subject by the bass, alto, tenor and soprano respectively (Example 17). The tenor, soprano, bass and alto answer in the dominant. The bass introduces the counter-subject in measure 13, which is stated three times in tonic and four times in the dominant.

Example 17. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 16, mature fugal writing style (mm. 6-16).

The musical score for Example 17 is presented in two systems. The first system features a Bass part (labeled *f* BASS) and a Tenor part (labeled *f* TENOR). The Bass part begins with the lyrics "Giv - ing\_ thanks un - to the Fa - - - ther". The Tenor part enters in measure 9 with the lyrics "Giv - ing\_". The second system features an Alto part (labeled *f* ALTO) and a piano accompaniment. The Alto part enters in measure 13 with the lyrics "Giv - ing\_ thanks un - to the". The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support throughout the system.

Christiansen sets the second section of the movement, measures 64-100, homophonically, with declamatory text, and places the melody in the soprano. The strong texture, along with full orchestra and fanfares, creates a mood of victory and praise. He uses a plagal cadence (Example 18) to show the religious nature of the work.

Example 18. F. Melius Christiansen, *The Prodigal Son*, Mvt. 16, plagal cadence (mm. 95-100).

SOPRANO and ALTO

Son. Hal - le - lu - jah, \_\_\_\_\_ hal - le - lu - jah! \_\_\_\_\_

TENOR and BASS

Son. Hal - le - lu - jah, \_\_\_\_\_ hal - le - lu - jah! \_\_\_\_\_

Overall, the harmonic quality of *The Prodigal Son* is primarily consonant and shows no aspects of 20<sup>th</sup> century harmonic developments. Logical in nature, the harmonic progressions follow the rules of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century composition. Though the oratorio has not been analyzed on a chord by chord basis, most phrases are tonal with a tonic-dominant relationship. The majority of Christiansen's chord choices are major triads, minor triads, and dominant sevenths. He also uses a few augmented sixth chords. Most dissonances are non-chord tones and are prepared and resolved accordingly. The composer primarily uses authentic cadences but also employs deceptive, half, and plagal cadences.

Christiansen writes primarily in a polyphonic style with an emphasis on imitation. His contrapuntal skill is visible from the simplest of two-part imitation, as seen in choral movements 2 and 13, to the maturity of fugal writing as found in the Overture and the final chorus. The composer occasionally uses homophony for contrast or emphasis of text. Animated homophony dominates the choruses of movements 3 and 15.

The composer uses melodic motives, especially from the Overture, to unify the entire work. These short, melodic ideas are often repeated, varied, or developed to create motivic unity within a movement and throughout the oratorio.

For contrast, Christiansen uses a variety of voicings in his oratorio. Six of his eight choruses are scored for SATB (movements 2, 3, 6, 8, 12, and 16). Movement 10 provides a fuller texture (SSATB) and movement 15, a lighter color (SSAA). While all of the choruses have orchestral accompaniment, 10 and 15 are the only movements with unaccompanied texture.

In the recitatives, the orchestral texture varies in three ways depending on the desired dramatic effect. For example, movement 2 uses sustained chords over which the text moves forward. The orchestra also alternates with the voice to create a dialogue-like exchange as found in movement 4. In addition, the orchestra disrupts the vocal line with two or three sharply accented chords as seen in movement 11. The arioso accompaniments in movements 3, 11, and 14 provide fuller orchestral textures and continuous rhythmic movement.

The texts found in *The Prodigal Son* were selected from the Old and New Testaments of the King James Bible. The primary source comes from the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, specifically verses 10-24. This passage is found in

movements 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, and 15. The composer included other biblical passages to support the parable of the prodigal son (Figure 3).

Movement 2	Luke 15:11 1 John 3:1
Movement 3	Psalm 119:9-10 Psalm 84: 4, 10
Movement 4	James 1:14 1 Peter 5:8 2 Corinthians 11:14 Ephesians 6:11-12
Movement 5	Luke 15:12-13
Movement 6	Psalm 2:3 Ecclesiastes 8:15 Isaiah 22:13
Movement 7	Luke 15:13-16
Movement 8	Ephesians 5:14 Ezekiel 33:11
Movement 9	Psalm 38:3-4 Luke 15:17-19
Movement 10	Psalm 102:1-2
Movement 11	Ephesians 2:1-5, 13
Movement 12	Luke 15:20-24
Movement 13	Micah 7:18-19
Movement 14	Psalm 116:1-5
Movement 15	Psalm 103:8, 11 Luke 15:10
Movement 16	Colossians 1:12-13

Figure 3. Scriptural sources by movement, *The Prodigal Son*.

Christiansen's oratorio, *The Prodigal Son*, is a large sacred work involving demanding forces. However, the composer realized, on a practical level, that many communities would not have access to a sufficient instrumental ensemble, and therefore provided an accompaniment reduction for organ or piano. With or without the suggested sermon, or address, the musical performance time is approximately forty minutes, which is ideal for Sunday worship, a yearly community performance, or programming within a community choir's artistic season. As stated in the preface of the score published by Augsburg, the composer intended the work "to be adapted to the ability of the average choir" and is therefore written at a moderately technical level.

Rhythmically, there are few challenges and the meter choices are standard and steady: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 and 6/8. If a meter change occurs, it happens at a new section, not within the musical phrase. The composer does employ several changes of tempi, sometimes subtle but oftentimes drastic. This relates to the meaning of the text and desired change of mood.

All vocal ranges (Figure 4) are successfully attainable, with the exception of the bass. This part is vocally demanding as it includes an extended range of two octaves and a major second, as seen below. However, Christiansen only uses the extended range occasionally and optionally; the music lies in a moderate range during the majority of the work.



Figure 4. Vocal ranges, *The Prodigal Son*.

Dynamically, Christiansen favored the romantic ideals of extremes and precision. Using the *forte* dynamic marking most often and avoiding a *mezzo piano* all together, the composer also uses *crescendo* and *decrescendo* markings to denote subtle dynamic changes.

Christiansen writes for the voice with solid voice leading skills, using mostly stepwise motion and avoiding large or awkward leaps. When necessary, large jumps are limited to the octave or another consonant note.

The English text makes the work easily accessible to an intermediate choir and allows for more rehearsal time that might otherwise be spent on introducing a foreign language and focusing on diction. The primarily syllabic setting of the text also helps with average choirs for whom flexibility continues to be a challenge.

The soloistic demands in *The Prodigal Son* vary in technical difficulty. Therefore, all soloists should be trained and experienced performers. Overall, the soprano and the alto roles are less challenging than the men's mostly because the women each appear only once. The soprano is featured in the third movement and the alto performs with chorus in movement 8. The soprano recitative and arioso demands a tender and lyrical style at the opening but a highly dramatic and flexible style in the arioso. The tessitura does reside on the second *passaggio* (E<sup>5</sup>) and the vocalist must be able to sing a high B-flat with freedom and color. Though the alto soloist's range is comfortable and singable, her challenge lies in the dynamic demands of a strong, full and warm tone within the spectrum of *piano* to *fortissimo*. The alto's twelve-measure melodic phrase also requires excellent breath control and legato line. Both women must be able to balance, according to the demands of the performance venue, with full orchestra.

The male soloists have the advantage of creating a character, though it is not labeled in the score. The men's solos are more demanding than the women's in the areas of extended range, endurance, dynamic contrast, chromaticism, and recitative-style independence. In general, the baritone has the most demanding performance of all soli. He must prepare two roles, the narrator and the father. Another challenge is the required vocal range, which includes F-sharp<sup>2</sup> to E<sup>4</sup>.

## CHAPTER 3. THE CANTATAS

### *Reformation Cantata*

The *Reformation Cantata*, composed in 1917, was written four hundred years after Martin Luther (1483-1546) posted his *Ninety-Five Theses of the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* on the church door at Wittenberg, Germany. Since music was an important part of Luther's religious, spiritual, and personal life, this work - a musical commemoration - is particularly appropriate. Luther sought to create a more meaningful worship experience by including congregational singing, in the vernacular, within the church service. One such congregational hymn tune, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* (*Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*) (Example 19), composed by Martin Luther in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, is the main musical theme of Christiansen's *Reformation Cantata*.

Example 19. Martin Luther, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*, chorale tune, original metrical version.





Like J. S. Bach's chorale cantata, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* (BWV 80), Christiansen uses this chorale tune as a basis for several movements of the *Reformation Cantata* including the Overture, number eight, and the final movement. In addition to commemorating the Protestant Reformation, this cantata celebrates the 1917 merger of the Norwegian Synod, the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, and the Hauge Synod into one entity - the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America.

The librettist, Wilhelm Pettersen (1860-1932), was a poet, a Lutheran pastor, and a teacher. He served as the pastor at First Lutheran Church of Portland, ME from 1912-1915 and as a college professor at Augsburg Seminary.<sup>52</sup>

The performing forces for the *Reformation Cantata* are baritone, tenor, and soprano soli, chorus, and orchestra. It was first performed on June 10, 1917. The composer conducted the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra and the 1,500-voice combined choir of the newly formed Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. Soloists were Gustav Holmquist, baritone, Mrs. Bruns [*sic*], soprano, and Professor Carsten Woll, tenor.<sup>53</sup>

Christiansen also conducted this work on May 17, 1924 at St. Olaf College. The college orchestra and band accompanied the St. Olaf Choral Society. The soloists were Gertrude Boe Overby, soprano, Obed Grinder, tenor, and Olaf C. Christiansen, baritone.<sup>54</sup>

The overall structure of this cantata is somewhat different from that of the previously examined work, *The Prodigal Son*. Though both pieces begin with an overture

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<sup>52</sup> O.M. Norlie, *History of the Norwegian People in America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), 299.

<sup>53</sup> J.C.K. Preus, *The History of the Choral Union of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1847-1960* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), 46-56.

<sup>54</sup> Concert program.

introducing thematic material, the *Reformation Cantata* lacks a sermon or address and consists of only one part, divided into eleven movements. It is approximately fifteen minutes shorter than *The Prodigal Son* and includes audience participation in the final movement, a congregational setting of *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*.

The *Reformation Cantata* includes eleven movements and is labeled by Christiansen, as seen in Figure 5.

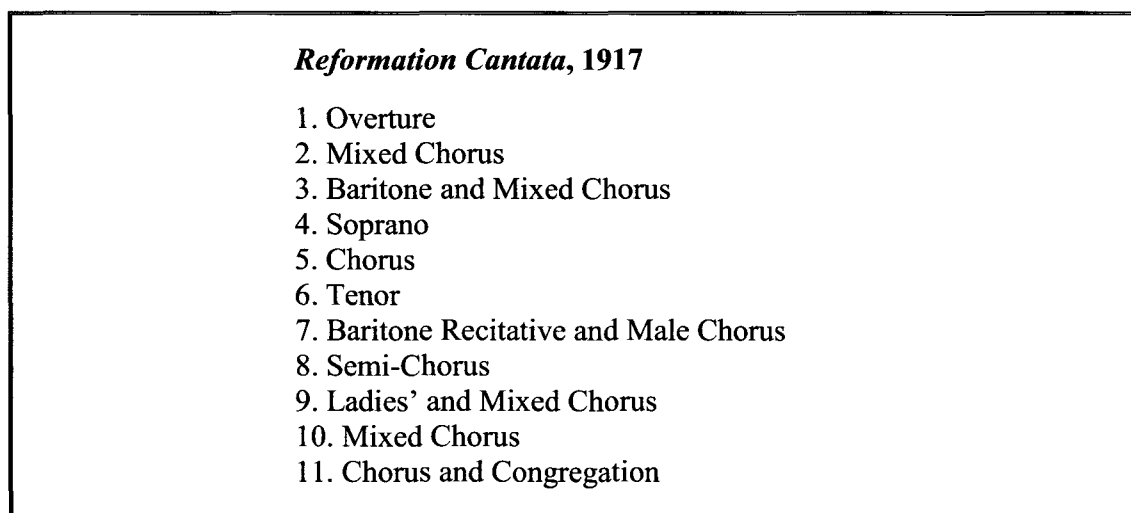


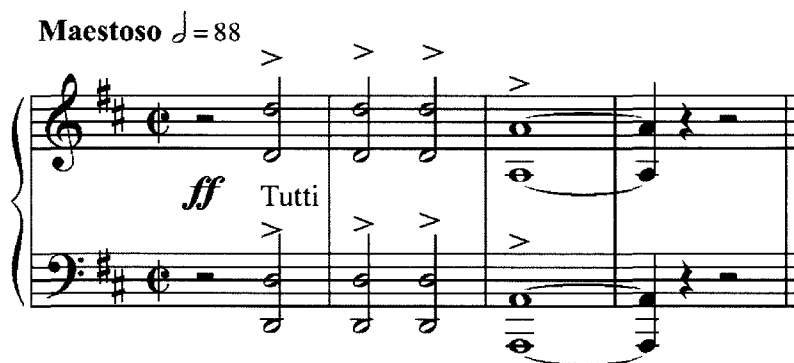
Figure 5. Individual movements as labeled by the composer, *Reformation Cantata*.

The Overture is in cut time and marked *maestoso*. The tonal center is D major and the march-like character suggests majesty and regality. This is appropriate as the primary material used in the Overture, Luther's *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, has been called the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation" due to its strong influence on increasing support for Luther's cause.<sup>55</sup> Christiansen introduces the theme in fragments, using the first four notes of the hymn (Example 20).

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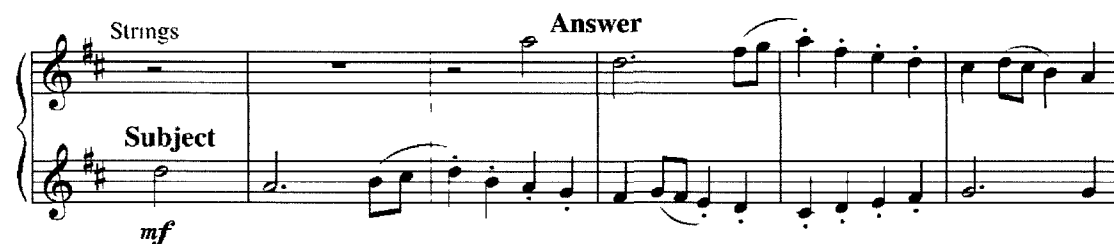
<sup>55</sup> John Julian, ed., *A Dictionary of Hymnology: Setting Forth the Origin and History of Christian Hymns of All Ages and Nations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1957), 323.

Example 20. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 1 (Overture), primary motive (mm. 1-4).



The introduction, measures 1-17, features this four-note motive, in octaves, and focuses on tonic and dominant. However, in the *leggiero* (light and delicate) section, the composer employs a fugal style of writing in measures 18-54, dominated by the strings and woodwinds. In measure 18, the second violin presents the fugal subject, a seven-note fragment based on the first pitches of Luther's chorale tune (Example 21).

Example 21. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 1 (Overture), fugal subject and answer (mm. 18-21).



The subject enters four times in the tonic and the answer is stated three times in the dominant. A brief *tutti* section beginning in measure 55 restates the opening theme and prepares the listener for the following transition to a contrasting theme (Example 22), in the woodwinds, in measure 66.

Example 22. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 1 (Overture), second theme (mm. 66-81).

This sixteen-measure melody, initiated by the woodwinds, descends primarily by stepwise motion and a homophonic texture prevails. Measures 82-97 present the melody again, yet reversed as the section begins with the second phrase of the melody (b) in a lower range followed by the first phrase (a) in triplet subdivision and added brass.

Following a highly chromatic modulatory transition to A major in measures 98-108, the composer interjects a fanfare-like passage in measures 108-124. The composer includes the primary motive (Example 20) in measures 115-117 in the lower voices. Christiansen restates and expands the opening theme, beginning in measure 125, with the lower voices and building to the higher voices. Now in D major, the composer includes a more rhythmically accurate fragment of the chorale tune. The first nine notes of the hymn appear, through overlapping entrances, twice in the tonic and twice in the dominant. Each statement occurs in a higher range until a final statement, in measures 132-140, includes the entire first melodic phrase of the chorale tune with Christiansen's harmonization. The homophonic texture and full orchestral setting contribute to the musical strength of the closing theme and concluding coda.

The second movement, *Lord of Hosts*, is set for mixed chorus and orchestra and marked *andante sostenuto*. It features a significant contrast to the Overture by using softer dynamic markings, suggesting adoration over strength. Christiansen uses the French horns in measures 1-2 to connect the Overture to the second movement. The composer uses a similar technique in *The Prodigal Son*. Though the horns are on the dominant (A) of the previous key (D major), Christiansen quickly establishes F major instead of D major (Example 23a). The choral material is an originally composed hymn which focuses on the adoration of the Trinity. The melody is sung by the alto voices while the remainder of the choir and the orchestra provide a homophonic, organ-like accompaniment. The orchestra primarily doubles the voices but occasionally provides embellishments and counter-melodies.

Example 23a. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 2 (mm. 1-6).

**Andante Sostenuto** ♩ = 72.

Soprano

Alto

Tenor (8va lower.)

Bass

*p* Horn

The twenty-two-measure melody consists of four through-composed phrases which make up the A section. Each alto phrase of the chorus is followed by an STB

response including the text, “We adore thee” (Example 23b). The section concludes with a three-measure homophonic modulatory restatement of the same text.

Example 23b. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 2 (mm. 7-10).

The image displays a musical score for a vocal ensemble and piano. It consists of five staves. The top four staves are for vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass), and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The music is in a homophonic style, with the piano providing harmonic support. The lyrics are: "We a - dore Thee, Lord of hosts, we do a - dore Thee, we do a - dore Thee, For Thy". The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *f* (forte).

The B section of this ternary form begins in measure 24, in the key of C major, and is an eight-bar phrase of animated homophony with a melodic shift to the soprano. This section exhibits the only use of a *forte* dynamic marking (measure 28) in this movement, which allows for a more dramatic interpretation. The A section, dominated by the alto melody and choral responses, returns in measure 33, in the tonic key. A melodic and harmonic variation of the alto theme (Example 23b) and direct modulation to D major begins in measure 45. The coda, beginning in measure 50 with the melody in the soprano and chromatic harmonic language, is short and includes both a statement of the Trinity (“Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”) and the closing “Amen.”

*Hear Ye, O Israel*, movement 3, reflects on the prophecy – the coming of Christ. An ancient musical character is established by the choice of minor mode (B minor) and the use of a shofar (measure 32), the Hebrew ceremonial horn. The composer notes that a trumpet may be used to represent the shofar. The movement, composed for baritone solo and mixed chorus, is structurally divided into two sections. The first section, measures 1-45, is marked *moderato* and consists of an instrumental introduction built on melodic material from the Overture (Example 22).

The first theme is introduced in measure 5 by the French horns and returns again in measures 16 and 84 (coda). Variations of the Overture's second theme (Example 22) appear in measures 8-11, 20, and 53-54, which are rhythmically enhanced by the use of sixteenth notes, as well as 37-41, which are varied by the use of triplets. Measures 11-15 feature the Overture's second theme (Example 22) in rhythmic diminution (Example 24).

Example 24. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 3, second theme from Mvt. 1 (Overture), (mm. 11-15).



The instrumental introduction is followed by the second section, measures 46-89. This passage includes alternating statements of accompanied recitative for baritone and unison choral response, which are chant-like in quality and through-composed. Measures 61-62 feature voice pairing between the soprano and tenor and the alto and bass. The tonality varies between the key of B minor and the B-Phrygian mode. This modality,

reminiscent of early music, enhances the syllabic text, which speaks of Old Testament Israel and a time prior to the birth of Christ.

The two recitatives are primarily syllabic with occasional text painting. For example, Christiansen decorates “wilderness” in a melismatic fashion in measure 50, uses an ascending leap on the text, “Lift up a banner” in measure 51, and sets the phrase “cleaving the sky,” in measure 71, with an ascending line. A closing motive of four ascending sixteenth notes followed by a long-held note appears at the conclusion of the recitative, measures 52-53, and both choruses in measures 62-63 and 82-83. This motive originates in measure 28 (Example 25).

Example 25. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 3, closing motive (m. 28).



The fourth movement, *My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord*, is also known as the *Magnificat* or the Canticle of Mary and is appropriately set for soprano solo. This text is taken from the King James version of Luke 1:46-55, and depicts Mary’s responses and feelings at having been chosen to be the mother of Jesus.

Marked *andantino*, this aria evokes several different moods and the form is rounded binary. The A section, measures 1-28, features the melodic theme (Example 26), which is introduced immediately by the orchestra and restated with slight rhythmic variation in measures 7-11. This section is in A major and Christiansen sets the text from Luke 1:46-48.



Example 26. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 4, melodic theme (mm. 1-2).



The B section is comprised of four smaller through-composed sections, each followed by increasingly chromatic transitional material. The first section, measures 29-46, features Luke 1:54-55 while Christiansen sets verse 51 in the second section, measures 58-65, and verses 52 and 53 in the third section, measures 70-85. The final section includes measures 95-110 and focuses on Luke 1:54-55.

Between measures 57-61, the composer changes the formerly lyric orchestral accompaniment by using a string *tremolo* and contrary motion. This setting provides variety to the listener and dramatically supports the syllabic text of the soprano solo. The harmonic language of measures 74-90 is highly chromatic, emphasizing the keys of F major and A-flat major. In measures 85-90, Christiansen utilizes a chromatically ascending line to work his way back to A major via the dominant seventh chord in measures 88-90. This transition is followed by a restatement of the opening theme (Example 26) in measures 90-93. The return of the abbreviated A section begins in measure 121, in A major, and features the first two verses of Luke's text. Due to the large pitch range and the extensive dynamic contrast, this solo is challenging and demands an accomplished vocalist.

Movement 5, *Arise, Ye Soldiers of the Cross*, features the brass section, a male chorus, and a mixed chorus to create the musical effect of strength and victory. The

structure includes a nine-measure instrumental introduction which begins in E minor and travels through the keys of D major and A minor before modulating to G major. There are two unison verses for male chorus, initially presented in G major in measures 10-19 and then in E minor in measures 30-39. Each unison verse is followed by a homophonic refrain for mixed chorus in C major. However, Christiansen re-harmonizes the last two measures of the second chorus, measures 40-49, for a cadence in G major. This prepares the listener for the 18-measure coda. The relationship of a perfect fourth, established in measures 1 and 5 of the introduction (E-A) is continued in the choral writing in measures 10 and 20 (B-E). This relationship originates in the opening interval of *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* (Example 20).

For clarity, Christiansen has set the majority of the text in a syllabic manner with the exception of the words “truth,” “jubilee,” and the final “hosannas.” These words are all ornamented melodically (Example 27). Measures 54-63 feature a unique choice of texture for a cantata. In order to contrast the thick textures and full timbres of the men, mixed chorus, and orchestra, the florid passages in the women’s voices and the last phrase of the movement are unaccompanied.

Example 27. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 5, text painting (mm. 54-57).



*Come Unto Me*, movement 6, is divided into three through-composed sections unified by a recurring melodic motif (Example 28). This motif, introduced by the strings in measures 1-2, reappears in the voice in measures 13-15.

Example 28. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 6, recurring melodic motif (mm. 1-2).



This tenor solo is based on Matthew 12:28-30. The tonal center is D major but the vocal line and accompaniment become increasingly chromatic in the second section, measures 13-23. The third section, measures 24-47, features the melodic motif (Example 28) in the orchestra in measures 33-35 and the voice in measures 38-39. The text is set syllabically and the tenor has a choice of octaves in measures 42-44. This movement is lyrical and includes conservative dynamic markings which evoke a mood of rest. It is musically straightforward and vocally accessible but does include the potentially difficult tritone interval.

Movement 7, *All Through the World*, is set for baritone recitative and male chorus. As in movement 5, Christiansen uses the all-male timbre to add depth and color to the existing line. There are three distinct sections (ABC). The A section, measures 1-62, has a tonal center of D minor, a march-like quality, and an instrumental interlude in

measures 40-54. The baritone recitative begins in measure 15 and is based on the first two measures of the orchestral introduction (Example 29).

Example 29. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 7, first theme and recitative (mm. 1-2 and 15-17).

ORCHESTRA




Recit. BARITONE

All through the world the church-es rear their steep - les As si-lent

Detailed description: The image shows two staves of music. The top staff is for the ORCHESTRA, featuring a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature (C). It contains a short melodic phrase starting on a middle C, moving up stepwise to a G, then down to an F, and finally to a half note on an E. The dynamic marking *mf* is placed below the first measure. The bottom staff is for the Recit. BARITONE, featuring a bass clef and the same key signature and time signature. It contains a recitative line with eighth and sixteenth notes, some with slurs. The lyrics 'All through the world the church-es rear their steep - les As si-lent' are written below the staff, aligned with the notes.

The B section, measures 63-80, shifts suddenly to the parallel key of D major. The second melodic theme (Example 30), sung by the baritone, is a descending line outlining a D major chord. The intervallic makeup of this melody is repeated over a B minor chord in measures 65-66 and a G major chord in measures 66-67. The accompaniment is fuller and more sustained in this section and chromaticism increases in measures 72-78.

Example 30. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, Mvt. 7, second theme (mm. 63-64).



Fear not, O Is - ra-el!

Detailed description: The image shows a single staff of music for the baritone, featuring a bass clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major). It contains a short melodic phrase starting on a D, moving down stepwise to a C, then to a B, and finally to a half note on an A. The dynamic marking *p* is placed above the first measure. The lyrics 'Fear not, O Is - ra-el!' are written below the staff, aligned with the notes.

In section C, measures 81-99, the male chorus joins the baritone in a unison relationship which continues through the first four-bar phrase. The melodic material is based on the first two measures of the opening theme (Example 22) and rises in pitch with every phrase. The dynamic contrast and a *maestoso* marking reflect the text describing the history of the Christian church and the work and victory of the reformers. This section begins in E minor and sequentially modulates back to D major. The baritone must possess the qualities of mature musicianship, dramatic ability, and an extended range for this movement due to a high tessitura.

The eighth movement, *The Word of God, Our Heritage*, features a meditative instrumental introduction based on Ludvig M. Lindeman's (1812-1887) chorale tune, *Built on a Rock*, and is set for an *a cappella* vocal quartet or small vocal ensemble, labeled "semi-chorus." The composer suggests that these voices be placed in an ante-room when possible.

The movement is in binary form in the tonic key of B minor. The A section, measures 1-53, is marked *larghetto* and a soft dynamic level prevails. The B section, measures 54-94, features full orchestra and chimes and concludes with an *a cappella* setting of Luther's chorale, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*. Measures 61 and 62 recall the opening theme from the Overture (Example 20) and help prepare the listener for the return of Luther's hymn. Measure 75 to the end of the movement is the first complete statement of the chorale tune *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, the musical basis of the cantata. Christiansen's harmonization of the chorale includes nine phrases of equal length. This section includes significant dynamic contrast in the orchestra, ranging from *pianissimo* to *forte*, and the tonal center modulates to D major. The instrumental

introduction, measures 1-74, ends with three strikes of the orchestral chimes as does the entire movement in measures 93-94. The three strikes symbolize the Trinity.

*She Came with Us Across the Sea*, movement 9, is written for SSA and SATB choruses and orchestra. The text is primarily syllabic and the choral texture is homophonic. “She” denotes the immigrants’ faith and the Reformation Church which they brought to America. The Augsburg Publishing House synopsis states, “It [She] dwells on its manifold roots in the various countries of the old world and on its triumphs in this new environment.”

The 29-measure instrumental introduction modulates from the key of the previous movement (D major) to E major. The form is modified rounded binary. The A section, measures 6-13, is in E major, the B section, measures 14-21, chromatically modulates from C major back to E major, and A<sup>1</sup>, measures 22-29, is in E major. The primary melodic motive in measure 6 appears in canon, one beat later and an octave lower, in the middle and lower strings. The following choral section is strophic, including two verses, and first presented by the women in measures 30-53. Verse two is sung by the mixed chorus in measures 54-71 and the women return in measures 73-82 with an *a cappella* coda consisting of newly harmonized material which is based on the first choral phrase in measures 30-33. The concluding ten measures are a partial restatement of measures 6-13, the movement’s opening orchestra phrase.

The contrasting light timbre of the female voices with the robust fullness of the mixed chorus draws attention to both the delicacy and strength of the text. While the first verse is mostly *a cappella*, the second verse has a driving triplet accompaniment, found throughout the movement, providing forward motion and musical energy. The triplet,

along with the florid sixteenth-note passages in measures 22-28 and the sextuplets found in measures 70 and 71, enhance the mood of traveling across the agitated sea.

Movement 10, *Here, One in Faith*, is sung by the mixed chorus. It is through-composed and constantly shifting in tonality. There are several similarities between this movement and the last section of the seventh movement. Following a six-measure instrumental introduction in E minor, Christiansen passes through F-sharp major (measure 12) and G-sharp major (measure 18) before cadencing in D major (measure 32). The melodic material is closely related (Example 31).

Example 31. F. Melius Christiansen, *Reformation Cantata*, comparison of melodic material in Mvt. 7 (mm. 81-84) and Mvt. 10 (mm. 7-10).

MALE CHORUS

Like Paul of old, A champ-ion bold, In spite of fire and sword,

SATB CHORUS (with one octave higher)

Here. one in faith, in pray'r and song, Pro - claim - ing truth.

In addition to similar melodic material, Christiansen chose the same tempo marking for both movements and predominantly used a unison texture to emphasize the text, “one in faith.”

Movement 10 leads directly into the final movement, *A Mighty Fortress*. This is a straightforward four-voice setting of Luther’s chorale tune. In the spirit of Luther’s desire for participation, the hymn is written for both chorus and congregation. The chorale is in bar form (AAB) and has a tonal center of D major. In the piano-vocal score, verse one is

printed within the vocal lines while verses two through four are printed in prose on the following page. This suggests that all verses should be sung.

Harmonically, the cantata emphasizes consonance and is dominated by major and minor triads and dominant seventh chords. Christiansen includes half, plagal, deceptive and authentic progressions but he uses the authentic cadence most often. All of the chorale tunes used in the cantata are harmonized by the composer.

The *Reformation Cantata* features a considerable amount of unison writing in contrast to the more imitative style found in *The Prodigal Son*. In fact, all imitative and canonic passages are played by the orchestra instead of sung by the choir.

From a technical standpoint, a choir of average ability successfully could prepare and perform this work. The vocal ranges (Figure 6) are fully extended but not extreme:



Figure 6. Vocal ranges, *Reformation Cantata*.

The men's and women's choirs do not need to be separate ensembles if additional choirs are unavailable. They could be members of the mixed chorus as well as the soloists. Christiansen constructs the solos in a less formal manner than that of *The Prodigal Son* and he does not use the recitative-arioso pattern of his oratorio. Though the keyboard cannot sufficiently achieve the requested orchestral colors, a reduction is a valid option for budgetary or instrumental availability issues.



The text and purpose of this composition truly limit the piece's versatility to Protestants, primarily Lutherans. Most of the texts are Wilhelm Pettersen's own words but he does borrow from scripture. Movement 4, the *Magnificat*, comes from Luke 1:46-55; movement 6 is based on Matthew 12:28-30; Luther's hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, is a paraphrase of Psalm 46.

Conventional meter signatures prevail and rhythmic patterns are straightforward and simplistic. Only five signatures are used, with common time dominating. There is no use of compound meter. Movements 3 and 9 are the only pieces to included more than one time signature.

Christiansen's harmonic language is influenced by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic style period. He writes with clear melodic themes, often not repetitive but continuously developing. The composer occasionally experiments with form while harmonies are intermittently non-functional and offer melodic embellishment.

For the chorus, Christiansen employs a basic homophonic style throughout, using mostly stepwise voice leading. Augmented seconds and tritones are avoided while sixths and octaves are used regularly. Interestingly, the most disjunct and angular chorus in the cantata is the arrangement of Luther's chorale tune found in movement 11.

### ***Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata***

The *Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata* was written in 1925 in commemoration of the 53 Norwegians who sailed to America, settled, and built homes, schools, and churches. The ship, *Restaurationen*, arrived in New York City on October 9,

1825.<sup>56</sup> This sloop carried the first large group of Norwegian immigrants to the United States.

The composer's second cantata, scored for soprano and baritone soli, mixed chorus, and orchestra, features the text of poet and pastor, B. J. Rothnem. It premiered on Norwegian Independence Day, May 17, 1925, at the State Fairgrounds in St. Paul, Minnesota.<sup>57</sup> The inaugural performance took place at a Norwegian Centennial celebration where the Church Centenary Committee of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America suggested that various choirs in Lutheran churches and communities throughout the United States and Canada unite in an encore performance of this cantata to be given on Commemoration Sunday, July 5, 1925.<sup>58</sup> Further, the committee wrote in its dedication of Christiansen's work:

The Land of the Midnight Sun has furnished much of the brawn and brains which has made America what it is today....They made the wilderness to blossom as the rose....

America has been enriched not only by the thrift, enterprise and patriotic devotion of these immigrants from Norway and their numerous descendants, but also by their not inconsiderable contributions in the fields of education, statesmanship, the Church, science, art and music. The land which has produced composers such as Edvard Grieg, Halfdan Kjerulf, Christian Sinding, Ludvig Lindeman, a virtuoso such as was Ole Bull, has, among many other prominent composers and conductors, also given America a Professor F. Melius Christiansen,...director of the famous Saint Olaf Lutheran Choir, an organization of some sixty mixed voices, than which there is no finer chorus in the land. Its fame has gone beyond the sea; its conductor is without a peer.<sup>59</sup>

This work is slightly shorter than Christiansen's oratorio, *The Prodigal Son*, and his *Reformation Cantata*. It is approximately 30 minutes in length and is divided into ten

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<sup>56</sup> Centennial Convention Program, 1925.

<sup>57</sup> William C. Benson, *High on Manitou Heights* (Northfield: St. Olaf College Press, 1949), 254.

<sup>58</sup> F. Melius Christiansen, *Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), Dedication.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

movements. Like *The Prodigal Son*, the piece incorporates a sermon or address to be delivered toward the end of the work. It is similar to the *Reformation Cantata* in that it utilizes audience participation in several movements and employs one of Martin Luther's most well-known chorale tunes, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*. It is a sentimental work written specifically for Norwegian-American Lutherans and recalling a passion for Norway, America, and God through familiar patriotic and Protestant melodies. However, there is no one melodic theme that provides continuity throughout.

The *Centennial Cantata* includes ten movements and is labeled by Christiansen, as seen in Figure 7.

<i>Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata, 1925</i>	
1.	Introduction and Chorus
2.	Chorus
3.	Chorus and Audience
4.	Baritone
5.	Soprano and Chorus
6.	Baritone and Chorus
7.	Baritone and Chorus
8.	Soprano
9.	Chorus and Audience
10.	Chorus and Audience

Figure 7. Individual movements as labeled by the composer, *Centennial Cantata*.

Unlike the aforementioned works, the first movement of Christiansen's *Centennial Cantata* includes a 52-measure instrumental introduction in lieu of an overture. The tonal center is D major and the form is through-composed. The initial melodic material is introduced in measures 1-8 and consists of two four-bar phrases, marked *fortissimo*

(Example 32). The first phrase is stated in octaves and moves in a descending direction while the second is in full instrumentation and hovers around the tonal center of B minor.

Example 32. F. Melius Christiansen, *Centennial Cantata*, Mvt. 1, first theme (mm. 1-8).



The composer introduces the second melodic theme, marked *piano*, in measures 21-24 and immediately repeats it an octave lower in measures 25-28. It emphasizes the tonality by outlining the D major triad. Both themes begin with a dotted eighth-sixteenth note anacrusis and a dotted quarter-eighth rhythmic pattern (Example 33).

Example 33. F. Melius Christiansen, *Centennial Cantata*, Mvt. 1, second theme (mm. 21-24).



The orchestral introduction leads directly into a four-part choral arrangement of the Norwegian National Anthem (*Ja, vi elsker dette landet*), composed by Rikard Nordraak in 1864 with Norwegian text by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. The original English translation is

unknown but the version of the translation, presented in Christiansen's score, is by B. J.

Rothnem (Example 34).

Example 34. F. Melius Christiansen, *Centennial Cantata*, Mvt. 1, Norwegian National Anthem with Rothnem's English text (mm. 53-72).

**ff** SOPRANOS

Yes, we love this land of ours,— As with moun-tain domes,  
 Norse-men, in what ev-er sta-tion Thank your might-y God;

Storm-lashed o'er the sea it tow-ers With the thou-sand homes,  
 He has kind-ly saved our na-tion From op-prs-sion's rod.

**p**

Love it dear-ly ev-er think-ing Of our fa-thers' strife, And the  
 That for which our sires con-tend-ed, And our moth-er's wailed Si-lent-

*cresc.* **ff**

land of Sa-ga sink-ing, Dreams up-on our life, And the  
 ly the Lord de-fend-ed, So our rights pre-vailed, Si-lent-

land of Sa-ga sink-ing, Sink-ing dreams up-on our life.  
 ly the Lord de-fend-ed, So our rights, our rights pre-vailed.

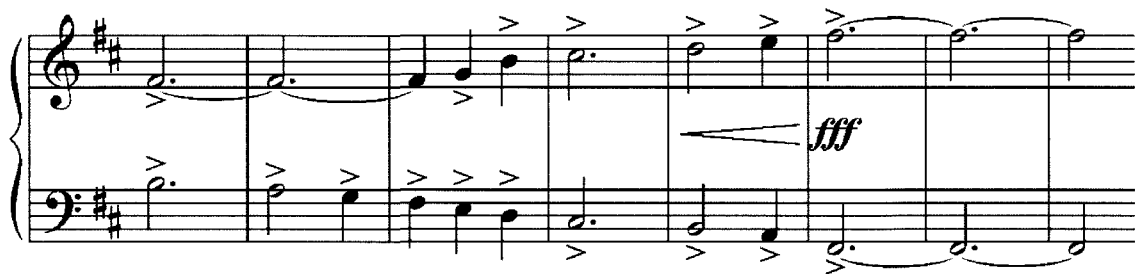
The final melodic material in the opening movement begins in measure 53 and was familiar to all Norwegian-American immigrants of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Christiansen set verses one and seven to the national anthem tune, in English and for mixed chorus. This tune consists of five four-bar phrases and is through-composed. The nationalistic text depicts the people's love for Norway and its beauty, as well as gratitude to God for saving

their country from oppression. The movement concludes with a seven-measure instrumental coda beginning in measure 73.

Movement 2, *Norway and Its People*, consists of two verses preceded and connected by different instrumental material in the key of B minor. The instrumental introduction, measures 1-12, is repeated in measures 110-125 with the addition of a final choral statement. For contrast, Christiansen uses an *a cappella* texture in measures 33-36, 63-64, and 99-102. Measures 65-78 feature an instrumental interlude that is slightly similar but contrasting from the opening material. Both choral verses, beginning at measures 13 and 79, share the same melodic material which originates in the first three measures of movement 1.

The unifying melodic theme that occurs in all instrumental passages, including measures 5-12, 71-78, and 114-121, features contrary motion and has a regal quality (Example 35).

Example 35. F. Melius Christiansen, *Centennial Cantata*, Mvt. 2, first theme (mm. 5-12).



The first three measures of the choral verse, measures 13-15, recall the first phrase of the opening material of movement 1 with slight rhythmic variation (Example 32, measures 1-4). This passage occurs again in measures 79-81. The second phrase of the

opening theme from the first movement (Example 32, measures 5-6) reappears, *a cappella*, in measures 33 and 34 as well as measures 99 and 100. These passages are exact in melodic and harmonic structure through the first beat of measure 34 and 100. The consequent phrase in measures 35-36 and 101-102 is new material.

Christiansen uses chromatic voice leading throughout, especially in the inner voices. He also uses dynamic contrast to enhance the text. For example, when singing about the “solemn forests” in measures 33 and 34 the composer uses the dynamic marking of *piano*. In contrast, he uses a *forte* marking for the word “thunder” in measure 38. The text speaks of the philosophy that man is tested and purified by hardships while at the same time being inspired by natural beauty and faith in God.

The third movement, *The Creator’s Praise*, invites the audience to join the chorus in a familiar hymn tune. Christiansen uses a simple unison setting of the chorale, *Den signede Dag*, composed by Christoph Ernst Friedrich Weyse (1774-1842). Weyse, a prominent Danish composer, was named court composer in Copenhagen in 1819 and published this melody (familiar in the Lutheran tradition as the hymn *O Day Full of Grace*) in his 1826 collection. Rothnem’s text has a regular metric accent, alternating lines of nine syllables with lines of eight (9 8 9 8 9 8) and focuses on man’s awe of the glories of nature and Jesus as Savior.

Surrounding the two stanzas of Weyse’s chorale tune are a ten-measure instrumental introduction, featuring the tune in the trumpets, and a short closing instrumental postlude, all in C major.

*Yearnings*, movement 4, is a baritone solo marked *andante espressivo*. Though through-composed, it is divided into four sections clearly defined by alternating meter

signatures and tempo markings. It begins and ends in G major while traveling through A-flat major and D major. Christiansen's modulation to A-flat major depicts the dark and dangerous turmoil of the sea while he uses D major to color the yearning for the West and the bright possibilities of a new life and land.

Characteristics of this movement include increased chromaticism, uneven phrase lengths, and changing meters. The range and tessitura are appropriate for the baritone voice until measures 65-66, when the soloist has the option to sing G<sup>3</sup> or G<sup>4</sup>. The text is declamatory and syllabic. It expresses one's faith in God and the desire for the freedom and challenge of the West. The baritone asks to be released from the hold of his homeland. In measures 27-30, Christiansen uses string *tremolo* in the orchestra to dramatically enhance the word "speeds."

The fifth movement, entitled *The Departure*, is scored for soprano and chorus with a tonal center of F major. This one-section piece features a lilting soprano melody consisting of four four-bar phrases of equal length. The first, second, and fourth phrases all begin with the same melodic material but conclude differently while the third phrase is rhythmically similar and melodically contrasting (AA'BA'). This phrase structure is commonly used in Lutheran hymnody. It is accompanied by a wave-like figure in the orchestra which is the unifying melodic theme. Only one measure long, it provides continuity throughout the movement and establishes the feeling of the surging sea (Example 36).



Example 36. F. Melius Christiansen, *Centennial Cantata*, Mvt. 5, continuity motif (m. 1).



In measures 25-32, the choir restates the last two phrases of the soprano solo (measures 17-24) in full, four-part homophony with expanded instrumentation and use of the upper range of the orchestra. The composer uses dynamic contrast to enhance the text, especially with the *piano* marking during the prayer in measure 27.

The final eight measures are a coda, with the alto voice based on the melody from measure 9, an octave lower. Christiansen further enhances the text with a continued *diminuendo* through the words “They are leaving, shores receding” in measures 33-38. He also creates a thinning choral texture by gradually removing the soprano, bass, and tenor voices, respectively, leaving only the altos to sing the last statement, “leaving.” This expressive technique symbolizes the departure - the small boat shrinking on the horizon and the immigrant voices more and more difficult to hear. The orchestra continues to play the wave-like theme (Example 36) throughout while doubling the outer voices in measures 33-35. The final cadence is unusually thin consisting of a simple triad, in root position, in the upper orchestral instruments.

Movement 6, *At Sea*, is through-composed but divided into four sections by key change and/or alteration of forces. Seemingly programmatic, the piece describes several

contrasting moods and creates a feeling of agitation due to the chromaticism and modulations. Christiansen also uses techniques such as tremolo, texture building, expansive range, and eighth-note rhythmic patterns to create the ebb, flow, and surge of the sea.

The first section, measures 1-44, begins in F minor and travels chromatically through the keys of F-sharp minor and G minor before preparing a modulation to B-flat minor. This orchestral section is marked *allegro* while the remaining sections are labeled *andante*. The initial melodic material is stated by the orchestra in measures 3-4. Christiansen immediately repeats this short idea a whole step higher to build a three-measure phrase. This pattern appears a second time in measures 16-18 and yet again in measures 29-31, each time one half step higher (Example 37).

Example 37. F. Melius Christiansen, *Centennial Cantata*, Mvt. 6, first theme (mm. 3-5).



The second melodic idea (Example 38) is presented in measure 11 by the higher pitched instruments. Slightly disjunct motion and syncopation contrast it with the more lyric character of the first theme. It is restated, one half step higher, in measures 24-27.

Example 38. F. Melius Christiansen, *Centennial Cantata*, Mvt. 6, second theme (mm. 11-14).



Measures 45-61 include a setting of the hymn tune, *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*, in the key of B-flat minor. The musical strength portrayed by this unison chorus draws attention to the familiar chorale tune, written by Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612). A Reformation composer, Hassler adapted his originally secular 16<sup>th</sup> century German melody, *Herzlich thut mich verlangen*, into a chorale for the Protestant Church.<sup>60</sup> Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676) freely translated the last portion of the medieval poem, *Salve mundi salutare*, attributed to Arnulf of Louvain (d. 1250), to create the text for this new hymn. Hassler's chorale tune was rhythmically simplified by Johann Crüger and along with Gerhardt's German text, *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, appeared in Crüger's 1656 *Praxis*.<sup>61</sup> It later was arranged by Johann Sebastian Bach for use in his *St. Matthew Passion* (BWV 244, 1727). Further, Gerhardt's text was translated into English in 1830 by the American Presbyterian minister James Waddel Alexander (1804-1859) and is the standard text found in most Protestant hymnals today.

Rothnem's text has a regular metric accent, alternating lines of seven syllables with lines of six (7 6 7 6 7 6 7 6). In this setting, it expresses a reminder of the people's trust in the Creator as the ruler of the sea. When land is sighted, they praise God for saving them and ask for His continued blessing.

The third section, measures 62-78, has a tonal center of F major and is entirely instrumental. The melodic material is familiar as Christiansen restates the wave-like theme from measure 9 of the fifth movement. This instrumental section continues with rhythmic

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<sup>60</sup> Julian, 835; *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 351-52.

<sup>61</sup> Julian, 835.

energy and increased chromaticism before the baritone announces the identification of land.

The final section combines orchestra, baritone solo, and chorus to depict the sighting of land and preparation for arrival in America, “Land of our dreams!” The last melodic idea is presented by the baritone in a fanfare quality in measures 79-81 (Example 39). The material outlines a triad and is limited to an octave.

Example 39. F. Melius Christiansen, *Centennial Cantata*, Mvt. 6, baritone (mm. 79-81).



In this section, the tempo is marked *andante*, a continuation from measure 45. The chorus and baritone have dynamic markings of *forte* and *fortissimo*, respectively, when accompanied by the orchestra in measures 79-81. In measure 79, the composer directs the choir to “rise quickly as they hear the word ‘Land.’”<sup>62</sup> Both baritone and chorus have syllabic statements of the text and the choir is entirely homophonic. This declamation is enhanced further by Christiansen’s *a cappella* setting in measures 80-85 and measure 92. These passages indicate increased dynamic contrast ranging from *piano* to *forte*.

The end of the sixth movement, marked *attaca*, leads directly into movement 7, *To America*. Christiansen continues to use the same forces and after a short instrumental introduction, the baritone solo presents a melody based on the second melodic idea of the

<sup>62</sup> F. Melius Christiansen, *Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), 30.

opening introduction from movement 1 (Example 33). For balance, the orchestral accompaniment is thin, simple, and independent of the solo.

The chorus restates the baritone melody in unison in measures 28-31 and in four-part harmony in measures 32-43, resulting in a strophic form with a melodic phrase structure of AABA'. Here, the accompaniment is increasingly thicker in texture and Christiansen expands the range by two octaves. Beginning in measure 31, the orchestra doubles the choir. The ten-measure coda, beginning in measure 44, features the repetition of tonic and dominant triads. The movement is marked *maestoso* and the tonal center is E major. Rothnem's text describes the claiming of America as the Norsemen begin to build their homes, churches, and schools in the following movement.

Movement 8, *In the New Home*, is a soprano solo in F-sharp minor. It consists of four verses of which one and three are the same. This modified strophic form results in the phrase structure ABaC. Characteristics of this movement include even, simplistic rhythmic patterns and unequal phrase lengths. The text is syllabic and declamatory while the melody is moderately disjunct in nature. Christiansen uses mostly thirds and sixths in the first, third, and fourth verses and features a more lyric, stepwise motion in the second. The composer makes full use of the soprano range without extending it.

Verse one, measures 9-29, consists of three phrases. The first, measures 9-15, begins on the downbeat and soars up, by steps and leaps, to the octave. The second phrase, measures 16-20, balances the first by moving downward, mostly by thirds, and the final phrase, measures 21-29, features intervals of a sixth with a static ending. These three phrases are repeated in verse three, measures 56-75.

Verse two, measures 32-49, is the shortest in length. The melody is through-composed and comprised entirely of quarter and half notes. Movement is primarily by stepwise motion and thirds while the orchestral texture is rhythmically simplistic and thin. As stated previously, the third verse is a musical repetition of the first verse but with different text. In measures 76-88, the fourth and final verse displays more rhythmic interest with the addition of the dotted quarter-eighth note pattern. Like the second verse, this melodic material is new. However, Christiansen does recall the head motive of the first phrase of verse one in measures 89 and 90.

Following a 14-measure instrumental introduction, the ninth movement implores audience participation with four stanzas of the American patriotic hymn *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*, harmonized by the composer. Samuel Francis Smith (1808-1895) wrote the text in 1831, at the request of Lowell Mason, and set it syllabically. The melody, attributed to John Bull (1562-1628), is also the national anthem of the United Kingdom entitled *God Save the Queen*.

The tonal center in movement 9 is G major and a homophonic texture prevails with occasional animation. Measures 15-28 are strophic and feature all four original verses of the American hymn. Similar to *The Prodigal Son*, Christiansen indicates: "A Festival Sermon or Centennial Address should be given between numbers 9 and 10."<sup>63</sup>

In the final movement, *Hymn of Praise*, Christiansen returns to the key of D major, the same key in which he began in the first movement. Like the previous, it is strophic and features audience participation, animated homophony, and a declamatory setting of Rothnem's text. Christiansen borrows the 16-measure orchestral introduction

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<sup>63</sup> F. Melius Christiansen, *Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), 40.

from the Overture of his *Reformation Cantata*. It is imitative in style. The melody for the audience's two verses is based on Luther's chorale tune, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* (*Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*). The orchestration is homophonic and doubles the choir.

Like Christiansen's other large works, the *Centennial Cantata* consists of traditionally consonant harmony, a preference for the major mode, and use of the authentic cadence. Homophonic texture prevails throughout the work, most likely due to the focus of this piece placed on the average community singer, church choir member, or audience participant. This is considerably different from the imitative and voice pairing styles of *The Prodigal Son*. The use of treble and male choruses, as seen in the previous oratorio and cantata, is absent in this work.

The text depicts the dramatic story of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian immigrant. It describes scenes from Norway in movements 1-5, from the journey across the sea in movement 6, and from settling in America in movements 7-10. Surprisingly, the text is expressed entirely in a declamatory fashion with occasional text painting. Melismatic passages and free recitatives are also nonexistent. The specific nature of the text nearly excludes the possibility of any contemporary performances, with the exception of Norwegian Independence Day.

This work is successfully accessible to the beginning and average ensemble due to the abundant use of unison singing and remaining homophonic texture. There is no division and the text is in English. The orchestral accompaniment often aids the singer and the vocal ranges are appropriate (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Vocal ranges, *Norwegian-American Centennial Cantata*.

Further, rhythmic patterns are common and simplistic, using triplets and syncopation for interest, while tempi are steady overall. Time signatures are conventional and even more conservative than Christiansen's other large works. Dynamic levels are carefully marked by the composer and range from *pianississimo* to *fortississimo*. Christiansen employs good voice leading in the choruses with dominating stepwise motion and a lack of difficult intervals. The baritone and soprano soli must be well-trained vocalists but could likely be members of the ensemble.

The composer intended for the work to be accompanied by an orchestra though he offers a piano reduction for practical purposes. A performance with a keyboard instrument only would significantly reduce the affect and expressive qualities of the cantata. Fundamental components of the work include color contrasts, string *tremolos*, and brass and woodwind passages, all of which are difficult to create or imitate on the piano.



## CHAPTER 4. AN UNACCOMPANIED MULTI-MOVEMENT WORK

### *Psalm 50*

Christiansen's contribution to 20<sup>th</sup> century choral music in America, especially his leadership in *a cappella* singing, is profound. Under his direction, the St. Olaf Choir, a primarily *a cappella* ensemble, achieved national and international acclaim. It is no surprise that some of his strongest and most popular original compositions were written for his favorite medium – the unaccompanied choir. *Psalm 50* is a representative example of this genre.

*Psalm 50* is a three-movement original sacred work written for unaccompanied SATB choir with *divisi*. Based on the fiftieth psalm of the King James Bible, it was composed in 1922 for the St. Olaf *A Cappella* Choir and soon became part of its standard repertoire. The anthem was written during a period of grief that followed the death of Christiansen's ten-year-old son, Carl, due to fatal injuries from a car accident.<sup>64</sup>

Research shows that this work has been performed on tour, in its entirety, twelve times: 1923, 1931, 1935, 1939, 1942, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1963, 1972, 1975, and 1988.<sup>65</sup> Movements 2 and 3, however, continue to be a staple of the St. Olaf Choir's repertoire.

The first movement of the three-part work is through-composed. Christiansen uses unison, homophonic, imitative and polyphonic writing styles to distinguish sections while unity is primarily achieved through the repetition of melodic themes. Interestingly, when introducing a new theme, Christiansen retains many characteristics of previous themes, so that the new theme appears to be familiar to the listener. He then creates

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<sup>64</sup> Bergmann, 130.

<sup>65</sup> Shaw, 643-685.

enough alterations or additions that the second theme also appears to have a new character. Tonally, this movement begins in F-sharp minor but quickly modulates to the dominant, C-sharp minor. An interesting direct modulation occurs in measure 36 where the tonality shifts to E major, the dominant of A major, which is the relative major of F-sharp minor. After shifting between E major and C-sharp minor for most of the remainder of the movement, Christiansen cadences in F-sharp minor and includes a Picardy third in the final chord. A tempo marking of *maestoso con moto*, along with the *forte* dynamic level and octave relationship between the men's voices, establishes a mood of power and strength.

The first tenors introduce the initial melodic material in measures 1-6 (Example 40) while the second tenors and second basses begin in a unison relationship in the first two measures and expand into a harmonic texture in measure 3. The baritones enter imitatively, filling out the chord structure, and complete the six-measure phrase.

Example 40. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 1, first melodic idea (mm. 1-6).

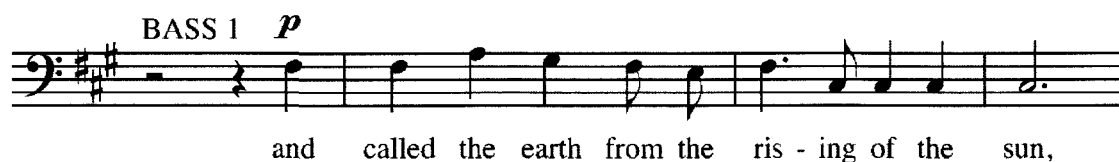
Maestoso con moto ♩ = 72

TENOR 1 *f*

The might-y God, the Lord, hath spo - - - ken, hath spo - ken.

The baritones present the second melodic theme in measures 8-10 (Example 41). Based on the first four notes of the opening material, this theme has a different melodic shape and rhythmic character. This statement is dynamically contrasting with a *piano* marking.

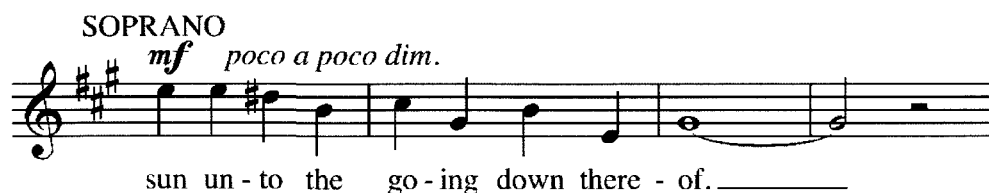
Example 41. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 1, second melodic idea (mm. 7-10).



This material is imitated at the fifth and the octave by the tenor in measure 10, the alto in measure 14, and the soprano in measure 16, which builds a thick polyphonic texture. The second theme is restated simultaneously by the first soprano and the second bass in measure 19. While the bass retains the original rhythmic character, the soprano is augmented over five measures.

A third melodic idea is presented by the soprano in measure 28 (Example 42). It expands throughout the next few pages, particularly in the tenor at measure 30 and the baritone at measure 32. Christiansen uses a descending line to enhance the meaning of the text, “the going down thereof.”

Example 42. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 1, third melodic idea (mm. 28-31).



In measures 1-35, Christiansen set the first verse of the fiftieth psalm (“The mighty God, the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto

the going down thereof.”). Though the text is primarily syllabic in nature, the composer uses a melismatic passage in the alto and baritone in measure 26.

The meter changes from common time to simple-triple in measure 36. This new section is marked *cantabile* and sets the second verse of the psalm (“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth.”). The first seven measures are entirely four-part treble texture and the melody is a variation of the third melodic idea (example 42). The harmonic character is primarily triadic. The basses join in measure 43 and Christiansen repeats the phrase, ornamenting the melody with triplet eighth notes. This triplet figure unifies the following thirty measures by appearing continuously in one of the four voices.

Verse three of the psalm (“Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.”) begins in measure 52 where the men state the text in a declamatory style with strong triadic harmonies. The first three notes of the melody are based on the last portion of the opening material (Example 43).

Example 43. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 1, comparison of measures 4-6 and measures 51-52.

TENOR & BASS

The homophonic texture in the men's voices is distinctly different from the chromatic and melismatic passages in the treble voices. The melody is passed from the men to the women and back to the tenors. The syllabic setting of the tenor line, beginning in measure 61, highly contrasts the melismatic triplet texture of the surrounding voices and draws attention to the text.

Christiansen continues this style as he sets the fourth verse of the psalm beginning in measure 67 ("He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people."). This two-against-three passage remains through measure 71. The composer not only provides rhythmic vitality with this choice but a contrast of syllabic homophony and a melismatic triplet passage, which occurs in at least one voice at all times. The texture continues to expand through the fourth verse until measure 72 where Christiansen reaches seven-part *divisi* with octave dominance in the sopranos and basses. The first soprano range is extended in measures 72-74, resulting in a taxing *tessitura*.

The declamatory style set forth by the tenors continues in the basses in measures 75-81. The text of this fifth verse ("Gather my Saints unto me; those that have a covenant with me by sacrifice.") reveals a direct order from God and Christiansen chooses the strength of the bass-baritone octaves and male timbre for its delivery. The upper voices emphasize accented repeated pitches like that of a *turba*, or crowd, reacting to and emphasizing the text (Example 44).

Example 44. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 1 (mm. 75-77).

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The key signature is F-sharp minor (three sharps: F#, C#, G#). The lyrics are: "judge, judge his peo - ple, Gath - er my Saints un - to me, those that have a". The Soprano, Alto, and Tenor parts have identical lyrics and melodic lines. The Bass part has a different melody and lyrics. The score is in common time (C).

The meter changes back to common time in measure 80 while the men start the sixth verse of the psalm in octaves (“And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself.”). The closing homophonic phrase, continuing in octaves, features the full ensemble with the sopranos recalling the second melodic idea (example 41). Christiansen shifts from F-sharp minor to the major mode with the use of the Picardy third on the final cadence.

Christiansen uses dynamics to shape this movement by choosing *forte* and *fortissimo* markings for texts relating to God or His judgment. In contrast, he uses *piano* and *pianissimo* markings for texts focusing on beauty. In measures 6-35, the composer uses a sustaining *crescendo* to enhance the text, “the rising of the sun,” and a *decrescendo* to show the “setting of the sun.”

The composer connects the first and second movements by having the tenors sing an F-sharp, the tonic of the previous movement. However, the basses and altos enter in measure 2 and establish a B major chord, creating a subdominant relationship and

establishing the dominant of the new key: E major. The structure of the movement is binary with an eleven measure introduction, the A section, measures 12-25, the B section, measures 27-40, and the coda, measures 41-49.

Movement 2 is constructed by using melodic repetition. Christiansen states the primary melodic idea, beginning in measure 2 in the altos, in the dominant before restating it in the sopranos, in the tonic (Example 45). This theme is repeated, in the tonic, in measure 27 and followed by new, yet similar, material.

Example 45. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 2, primary melodic material (mm. 12-19).

SOPRANO 1

of - fer un - to God the sac - ri - fice of thanks-giv - - - ing and  
pay, and pay the vows un - to the Lord, un - to the Lord.

This melodic material consists of two four-measure phrases which demonstrate symmetry and balance. The primarily syllabic treatment of the text permeates both verses of the psalm: verse 14, measures 1-19 and 25-34, and verse 15, measures 21-25 and 35-49. The homophonic texture in the basses and tenors contrast and highlight the melody in the alto.

The sopranos enter in measure 9 to ornament and extend the alto phrase. While the sopranos restate the melodic material in the tonic, the tenors add interest to the

predominantly homophonic texture by imitating fragments of the theme in measures 13-19.

Christiansen introduces a new melodic idea for verse 15 and sets the two statements similarly. The first, beginning in the alto voice in measure 21, features a triplet pattern and passes the melody to the sopranos in measure 23 (Example 46).

Example 46. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 2, secondary melodic material (mm. 21-22).



The second, which also features the triplet, begins in measure 35 with the first sopranos introducing the melodic material in the tonic, the second sopranos restating it two measures later in the dominant, and the altos finishing the phrase in measure 39. Despite these similarities and the familiarity to the ear, each idea has considerably different pitch, rhythmic, and dynamic elements.

The concluding nine measures of the work act as an extended-cadence coda emphasizing the last two words of the fifteenth verse of the psalm. Christiansen builds an eleventh chord on B beginning with the bass and baritone in measure 41 and consecutively adding *divisi* tenor, alto, and soprano one beat apart. The last phrase of the movement ends as the composer began: one lone voice, the alto instead of the tenor, and a final statement of the text, by full chorus, in homophony.



Movement 3 is in binary form with the A section including measures 1-43, the B section including measures 43-85, and the coda beginning in measure 85. The tonal center is A major and the text is based on a combination of the first phrase of verse 23 (“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me (the composers alters “me” to “God”)), the last phrase of verse 1 (“and called the earth from the rising of the sun”), and the Protestant doxology (“Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”). Since Christiansen uses the text from verse 1 in both the first and last movements of *Psalm 50*, it serves to unify the composition.

Christiansen sets the beginning of the last movement with a fugal exposition. The subject is introduced in measures 1-6 by the first sopranos at a *forte* dynamic level (Example 47). Its range spans an octave and outlines the diatonic scale. With a meter marking of cut-time and a tempo marking of *allegro*, the syncopation in measures 2 and 4 gives the line buoyancy and lilt.

Example 47. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 3, fugal subject (mm. 1-6).

SOPRANO I  
*Allegro* ♩ = 96  
*f*

Who - so of - fer - eth praise \_\_\_\_\_

The second sopranos restate the answer in the dominant (measure 6) in the form of a real answer followed by the tenors in the tonic (measure 15), the baritones in the dominant (measure 20), and the basses in the tonic (measure 26). The tenor statement,

measures 15-20, is an exact repetition while the other statements begin identically and then vary at the end of the phrase.

The countersubject, beginning in measure 6, directly follows the fugal subject in the first sopranos and is much shorter in length, consisting of only five notes (Example 48). This is unusual as the countersubject is typically introduced while the answer is sounding for the first time. In contrast to the subject, the countersubject has a downward motion.

Example 48. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 3, countersubject (mm. 6-8).



Rather than singing the subject itself, the altos restate the countersubject in measures 9-11, creating a phrase extension to the tenor entrance of the subject in measure 15. In measures 8-15, the first and second sopranos continue in free counterpoint. The countersubject is stated seven times thereafter, emphasizing tonic-dominant relationships. Beginning in measure 32, Christiansen uses *stretto* of the countersubject to build intensity. An unusual choice, this growth of texture is the apex of the first section.

The B section begins with a homophonic statement in the altos and tenors. With a *piano* marking and thinner texture, it is contrasting to the previous twelve measures. The melodic material in measures 43-49 is based on the second theme of the first movement (Example 41) and unifies the work.

A variation of the movement's initial melodic material (Example 47) appears in the sopranos beginning in measure 54 (Example 49). Though it suggests melodic inversion, it is not exact. The variation appears in *stretto* in the altos in measure 55, the basses in measure 57, and the tenors in measure 58.

Example 49. F. Melius Christiansen, *Psalm 50*, Mvt. 3, fugal subject in inversion (mm. 54-56).



In measures 62-80, the composer features a familiar chorale tune. In the Lutheran tradition, *Old Hundredth* is often sung as a doxology. The tune is from the 1551 edition of the *Genevan Psalter* for the 100<sup>th</sup> psalm and attributed to Loys Bourgeois (ca. 1510-1560), a French composer for the Calvinist church during the Reformation. The English text was written in 1674 by Thomas Ken, an Anglican Bishop.

Christiansen's setting of the doxology, in the key of A major, is creative and outstanding. The first phrase is stated by the upper three voices in full homophonic harmony but before they can move on to the second phrase, the basses present the chorale tune in octaves, from the beginning. The upper voices engage in free counterpoint. In measure 76, the sopranos recall the subject and the text from verse 23 (Example 47) while the basses complete the last phrase of the chorale tune. The inner voices sing variations of the subject beginning in measure 77.

The coda, measures 85-92, is a strong seven-part and eight-part homophonic statement of the text, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God.” Christiansen uses voice pairing of women’s and men’s voices along with a syllabic style to emphasize declamation and power.

Christiansen uses a fuller harmonic spectrum in *Psalm 50* as compared to the works previously analyzed. Augmented sixth, ninth, and eleventh chords supplement the expected major and minor triads and seventh chords. Minor triads and sevenths dominate the first movement while major qualities are more frequent in the second. In the last movement, the moods of joy and praise are enhanced by major triads and dominant seventh chords. As in his large works, the composer prefers the authentic cadence, though half cadences appear often in overlapping phrases.

*Psalm 50* is a demanding work with a performance time of approximately nine minutes. Though each movement may be prepared and performed separately, the entire work is challenging in style, divisi, endurance, emotional investment, and continuous tonality. The vocal ranges (Figure 9) are greatly extended in every voice.

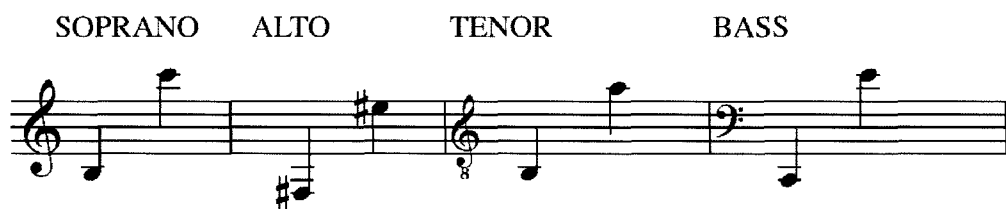


Figure 9. Vocal ranges, *Psalm 50*.

The first movement is the longest and most challenging of the three as it includes the most variety of moods and compositional styles. This piece is rhythmically more

difficult than any of the large accompanied works. Due to the vocal and musical demands, a mature, advanced vocal ensemble would be best equipped for the entirety of the work. The last two movements, however, are accessible to the advanced high school choir and college ensemble.

## CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

All of the examined works in this study were written between 1917 and 1925, during the middle years of F. Melius Christiansen's compositional career. There are no commissions among the four multi-movement works, although both cantatas were written for specific events and *Psalm 50* was composed for the St. Olaf Choir. The *Reformation Cantata* was composed for the 1917 merger of three Lutheran synods into the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. The *Centennial Cantata* was written for the 1925 commemoration of Norwegian-Americans.

Christiansen alters the use of forces in each work with the oratorio employing organ, orchestra, SATB chorus, women's chorus, and SATB soli. In the *Reformation Cantata*, the composer utilizes orchestra, SATB chorus, women's chorus, men's chorus, STB soli, and audience participation. In contrast to the unaccompanied *Psalm 50* for mixed chorus, the *Centennial Cantata* features orchestra, soprano and baritone soli, SATB chorus, and audience participation.

When regarding form, *The Prodigal Son* follows a traditional structure. It consists of sixteen movements and is divided into two parts, separated by a sermon. Christiansen constructs the solos on the recitative-aria pattern. Ternary and binary forms dominate and despite the use of some uneven phrases, the composer utilizes the four-measure phrase most often. The *Reformation Cantata* includes eleven movements, in one part, without intermission or address. The composer uses audience participation during the final movement. There are a variety of forms used and the four-measure phrase occurs most often in the chorus movements while phrases of unequal lengths dominate the solos. Like the oratorio, the *Centennial Cantata* contains a sermon and it features audience

participation similar to the *Reformation Cantata*. The 1925 cantata contains ten movements made up primarily of single forms. *Psalm 50* consists of only three movements in which the outer two are continually developed while the middle features repetition.

Melodically, Christiansen imposed several common characteristics on these multi-movement works. For example, conjunct motion is melded with a diatonic harmonic framework. Also, most of his melodies are limited in range. Many movements are built from short, melodic ideas which are often repeated, varied, or developed. These melodic ideas are used to create motivic unity within a movement and throughout an entire work. *The Prodigal Son* features entirely original melodic material while the cantatas and *Psalm 50* highlight borrowed melodies including chorale tunes and patriotic songs.

The major mode dominates each work. In the oratorio, the minor mode is used only to depict the character of the son. The cantatas, which include more minor tonalities than the oratorio, have a logical harmonic relationship — major-minor and tonic-dominant. Consonant harmony prevails as major triads, minor triads, and dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords comprise nearly all of the harmonies. Non-chord tones, of which passing and neighbor tones are the most common, provide a mild dissonance which is most often prepared and resolved according to the rules of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Authentic cadences prevail and generally follow the expected dominant-tonic progression.

These multi-movement works contain monophony, homophony, polyphony, imitation, and fugal writing. While employing all of these styles, the oratorio features imitation. The cantatas, however, feature homophonic writing while imitation plays a

lesser role. Unison writing is utilized often in the *Centennial Cantata* while *Psalm 50* focuses on the pyramid technique of building chords. For those movements in ternary form, Christiansen often thickens the texture in the return. He also uses alternating combinations such as choral-instrumental, choral-choral, and solo-choral to create a variety of colors.

Though the cantata texts were written specifically for each work, *The Prodigal Son* and *Psalm 50* are taken directly from scripture. In each work, a syllabic style is used for clarity and declamation but the occasional melismatic passage offers text painting and ornamentation.

Christiansen avoided *divisi* and extreme ranges in the oratorio and cantatas. *Psalm 50*, however, written for the composer's own ensemble, does feature both of these challenges. Overall, the outer voice parts are more demanding than the inner parts. While all solos are singable, the baritone solos are the most vocally and musically challenging.

Conventional meter signatures and simplistic rhythms pervade the choruses. Tempo changes do occur but are metrically sensible. Despite the works' unique challenges, they all can be prepared and performed by average to advanced choral musicians. Of the four examined works, *Psalm 50* is the most demanding.

Despite his early training in violin and organ, Christiansen's music is vocally conceived. His melodies are most often limited to the range of an octave or tenth and stepwise motion dominates. Rapidly moving passages, as expected in instrumental melodies, rarely occur and rhythms are straightforward and easy to perform. The great majority of Christiansen's texts are set sensitively and imaginatively.



However, there is evidence of instrumental influence. Christiansen uses melodic sequences and fragmented melodic lines frequently. Some compositions utilize dotted rhythms, a primarily instrumental feature. Texture also shows a direct influence. Christiansen's partiality for color contrast has been observed in all four examined works. Through the use of antiphonal techniques, voice pairing, and alternating men's and women's voices, the composer creates choral sounds that resemble colors produced by the organ.

Christiansen was known to be more concerned with the linear line than with the pronunciation of text. This, too, most likely originated with his instrumental background. He unified vowels and stressed legato singing to produce beautiful vertical sonorities. He demanded that his choir sing with linear concentration and pitch control. Christiansen often used instrumental terminology when instructing his choir how to sing and certainly strove for a rich, dark choral color.

Analysis of Christiansen's oratorio, two cantatas, and unaccompanied work revealed that he was a musical craftsman. Sections within movements are harmonically related in a logical manner and movements within the works are tonally related. These works are unified by recurring melodic themes and dissonances are appropriately prepared and resolved. Extreme care is taken regarding voice leading and results in consonant harmonies by stepwise motion. Finally, the text is set rhythmically which allows stressed syllables to appear on accented beats and on notes of longer duration.

Though Christiansen's music alone often evokes strong emotions or aesthetics, it is frequently associated with an extra-musical factor. For example, the *Reformation Cantata* and *Psalm 50* are additionally enhanced by one's love of the church and passion

for the scripture while the *Centennial Cantata* is expressive to Norwegian-Americans of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century because of their love of country. Interestingly, the librettists of these cantata texts are Scandinavian-Americans, members of the Lutheran Church, ministers, and associated with St. Olaf College. The texts have a religious quality and are set expressively and descriptively. Programmatic elements and text painting occur, especially in *The Prodigal Son*.

The composer was a practical man who was experienced in the musical scene of southeastern Minnesota and the surrounding region. When writing the large works, he composed for a festival choir consisting of average church choir members. Even though his more difficult pieces were written for the St. Olaf Choir, it was made up of students and amateur singers. It is for these reasons that Christiansen wrote singable and easily understood melodies, obvious rhythms, and straightforwardly anticipated harmonies.

Christiansen's large works are worthy of continued study because of their musical and historical value. With such a vast body of small *a cappella* works in the composer's repertoire, these multi-movement works are distinctive. Though the composer was highly influenced by composers of the Baroque and Romantic eras, his compositional style differs significantly from other contemporaries and cannot be compared. His music simply stands alone in a unique category of American choral music.

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